NOVEMBER 26, 2001

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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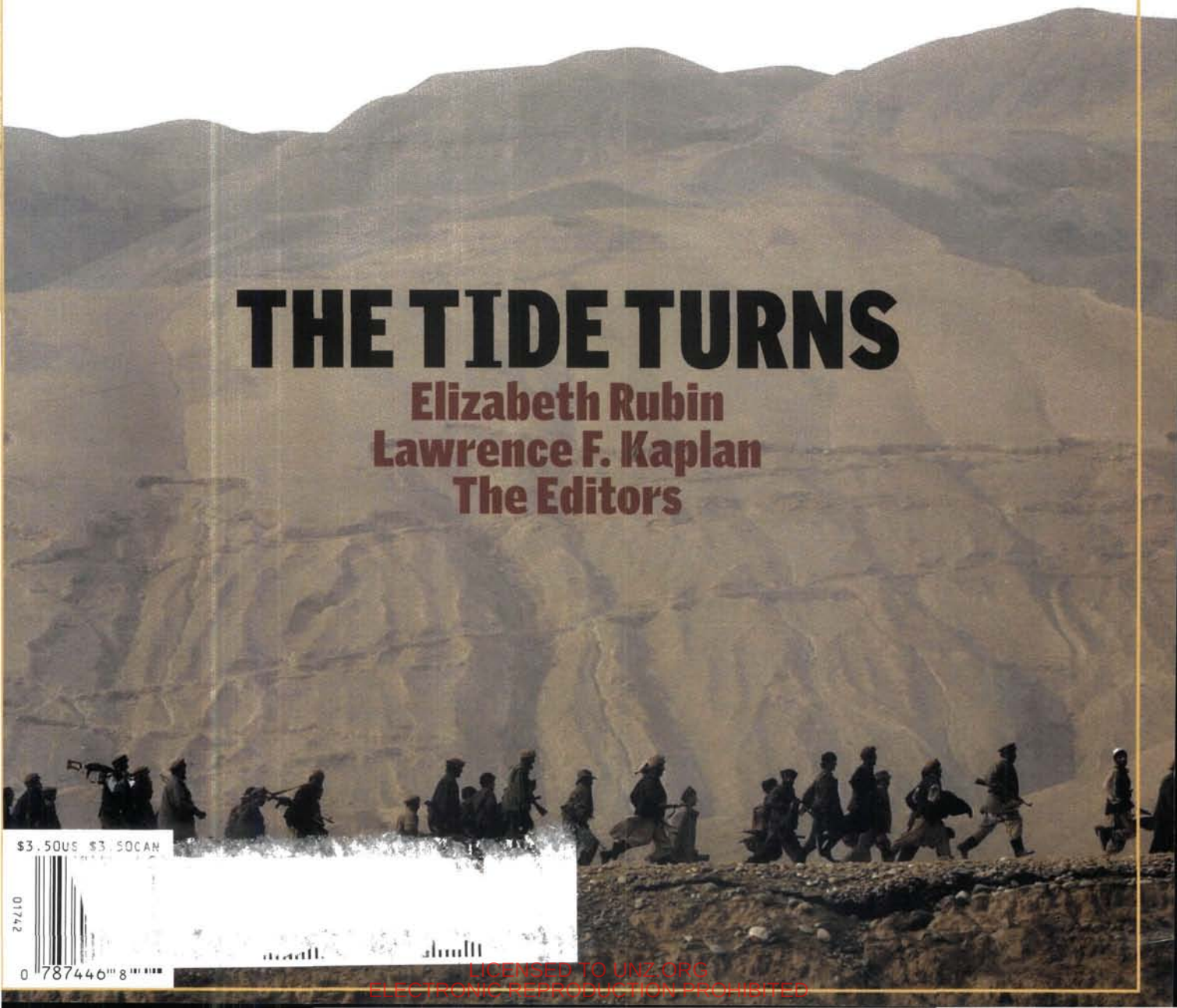

THE TIDE TURNS

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
A Journal of Politics and the Arts

WASHINGTON, D.C.
NOVEMBER 26, 2001
ISSUE 4,532

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On the Cover : Photo by SION TOUHIG/GETTY IMAGES
On the Web : www.thenewrepublic.com

THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 225, Number 22, Issue 4,532, November 26, 2001. (Printed in the United States on November 14, 2001.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated January 1 & 8, April 9 & 16, July 9 & 16, August 27 & September 3, 2001 and December 31, 2001 & January 7, 2002) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. For advertising inquiries, please contact Meredith Cossa at (202) 331-7494 or our NY sales office at (212) 465-8447. Yearly subscriptions, $59.94; foreign, $99.94 (U.S. funds); Canada, $79.94 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $4.00 (includes postage & handling). **© 2001 by The New Republic, Inc.** **(ISSN 0028-6583). Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 331-0275. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, CD-ROM, issue, and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 37298, Boone, IA 50037-0298. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: tnr@aol.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call 1-800-827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.**

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Conversion strategy

TO THE EDITORS:

I am writing to express my outrage at the implications of your scurrilous attack on my friend Grover Norquist in your November 12 issue ("Fevered Pitch"). Franklin Foer made numerous statements that bear no semblance to the truth, but I would like to address one with which I have personal experience. Grover Norquist has spent his entire life organizing members of the conservative and Republican coalition in the United States with great effect. His efforts to organize Christians, Jews, and Muslims are merely a part of his overall campaign to organize every possible group to support the Republican agenda and its candidates. To suggest that Grover commenced organizing the Muslim community because he was, somehow, unsuccessful with the Jewish community is ridiculous.

I have known Grover for over 20 years and, in fact, it was over 20 years ago that Grover started helping to organize the Jewish community on behalf of Republicans, at the time of Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign. Grover was so involved in the Jews for Reagan effort that, on one particularly amusing occasion, National Public Radio insisted on interviewing him as to how he and his fellow Jews would be voting!

Grover's continuing efforts to help the Jewish community play a more prominent role in the Republican Party and the conservative movement continue to this day. He was the first in Washington to host (in his home) an event for the Young Jewish Leadership PAC, and his activism on behalf of Toward Tradition led that group to confer on Grover its prestigious TANA award.

As an Orthodox Jew and president of Jewish educational institutions, I find your attempt to smear Grover incredibly offensive. Grover organizing Muslims is no different than Grover organizing Jews or Grover organizing dentists. That is what he does. He organizes. To read anything more into it than a desire to help his country, his party, and his president is to show incredible arrogance and ignorance about Grover Norquist. You owe him and your readers a profound apology.

JACK ABRAMOFF
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITORS:

Franklin Foer doesn't seem to have thought out his attack on Grover Norquist very carefully. Foer cites an anonymous source to the effect that Norquist and I tried but failed to "bring Jews into the

[GOP] fold." In fact, with Norquist's help, Toward Tradition has very effectively nudged Jews in that very direction. According to statistics from the American Jewish Congress and elsewhere, between the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections, the Jewish vote for Bill Clinton went down from 86 to 78 percent. Admittedly there's still a very long way to go, but I take hope from the mayoral election in, of all places, New York, where Republican Michael Bloomberg won 52 percent of the Jewish vote—an astonishing and gratifying result.

The more serious problem is that Foer trashes Norquist for urging Republicans to reach out to Muslim Americans, by which Foer implies that these Muslims ought to be excluded entirely from the attention of our party. Let's assume, as I do, that it's desirable for the United States for Muslim citizens to join the camp of those who support freedom, limited government, and economic opportunity. Now how is, let's say, George W. Bush supposed to reach Muslims except through the organizations that, for better or worse, represent their community? Unfortunately one finds no major domestic Muslim organizations unsullied by leaders who have said stupid, even vicious, things. If your job is to assimilate these people into the GOP, influencing them to adopt Republican values, you have to go through their present leaders, which is just what Norquist has done. The unacceptable alternatives are to freeze out Muslim Americans altogether, or to go door-to-door. To say that Norquist "provides ... legitimacy" and otherwise promotes distasteful individuals who apologize for terror is to entirely miss the point of what he means to do, namely to help lead our nation's Muslims to a truer vision of what it means to be good Americans.

RABBI DANIEL LAPIN
President
Toward Tradition
Mercer Island, Washington

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Please address letters to Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036 (letters may also be sent electronically to tnr@aol.com). All letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be fewer than 200 words. Letters may be edited for space and clarity. Please do not send letters via fax.

Use of energy

TO THE EDITORS:

Readers of Michael Rubin's Malual Kon Dispatch on the jihad in Sudan will want to know about a national divestment campaign against the oil companies fueling Khartoum's "holy war" against its black African population ("Uncivil," October 22). While it is illegal for U.S. citizens to buy a drop of Sudan's petroleum, millions of Americans have become inadvertent partners to slavery and slaughter because our pension and retirement funds contain the stock of Canada's Talisman Energy. It was this loophole that Congress meant to fix in the Sudan Peace Act, now tragically shelved by the president, who is trading the lives of anti-jihad Africans for promises of cooperation from Sudan's National Islamic Front regime.

A grassroots movement of abolitionists has led many large investor funds to divest of Talisman stock. These include the world's largest pension fund, TIAA-CREF, and the worker pension funds of the City of New York, and of California, New Jersey, New York, and Wisconsin. The comptrollers of New York City and New York State, Alan Hevesi and Carl McCall respectively, wrote to state and city comptrollers asking them to divest. Still, however, U.S. mutual funds remain sullied by Talisman slave-and-slaughter stock (e.g., Fidelity Investments of Boston).

Americans were humiliated when Osama bin Laden used our own planes against us, but for years Khartoum—with the help of its Canadian partner, Talisman—has sucked the oil from under the feet of the Africans it wants to enslave and used it to fund the jihad. Much of this was done, and continues to be done, with U.S. capital. Bin Laden's company built the road from Khartoum to Port Sudan, which facilitated the construction of the pipeline. The idea to transform planes into guided missiles might well have come

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as he thought about using his enemy's oil to pay for the jihad.

CHARLES JACOBS
President
American Anti-Slavery Group
Boston, Massachusetts

Memory play

TO THE EDITORS:

Bernhard Schlink's prose has received kudos from people as diverse as Oprah Winfrey and George Steiner. But according to Ruth Franklin, the fiction of Bernhard Schlink "is not only mediocre, it is pernicious" ("Immorality Play," October 15). Pernicious? Does Franklin mean to suggest that works of fiction might be harmful to their readership? Perhaps so much so that the choice of such a harsh term suggests the world might be a better place without these works. What is it about Schlink's fiction that arouses such hostility?

For Franklin, it seems that on the "very serious ethical questions" of Holocaust and memory, Schlink's fiction fails to "provoke any kind of rigorous thought." This complaint seems to be less about Schlink's fiction than it is a complaint about treating the subjects of Holocaust and memory in the genre of fiction. Must such questions only be assessed from the point of view of Kantian morality? This is a crabbed and idiosyncratic view of the nature of literature.

DENNIS PATTERSON
Distinguished Professor of Law
Rutgers University School of Law
Camden, New Jersey

Shades of gray

TO THE EDITORS:

I am totally baffled by Idiocy Watch (Notebook, October 15). While I hardly agree with all of the sentiments expressed in the paragraphs you have selected under the cognomen "idiocy," it seems to me that the tendency of your choices is to stifle commentary that is critical of U.S. overseas involvement or that draws any links, causal or otherwise, between U.S. behavior and the acts of September 11. As a university-level American historian in Egypt, please allow me to offer a word of caution. There are important kernels of truth in some of these statements, and we would do well to take note (for instance, Brian Sewell's suggestion that the epithet "terrorist" deserves a good, hard second look).

As a general rule, one ought to endeavor to see what is true in the words of one's opponents, even when those opponents are fired with hate. During the Vietnam era, policymakers failed to take seriously what the Vietnamese were saying, and thus substituted the medieval morality play of the cold war for the rich Shakespearean ambiguities of Vietnamese history, which in fact lay open before them all along. The consensus of historians of the Vietnam conflict seems to agree that the lessons of that war were neither that we ought not to go to war without overwhelming public support nor that we ought always to use only massive force, if force be used at all. Both of these "lessons" suffer in any careful analysis of that conflict. Rather the lesson of Vietnam is that we ought always to understand, as far as possible, what it is that motivates those who oppose us. Failure to do so led to that disaster.

DR. STEWART WINGER
History Department
The American University in Cairo
Cairo, Egypt

Forced entry

TO THE EDITORS:

I was shocked and frightened by the tenor of Martin Peretz's "Entry Level," concerning the rights of immigrants (October 15). Peretz argues that many Americans are worried about a "fifth column" of Arab and Muslim terrorists living hidden within the United States. Rather than counter this fearsome thought with reason, Peretz suggests that the United States may well be infiltrated with anti-American activists and, moreover, that this is the fault of our own immigration policy. While Peretz is certainly correct that the United States must be more cautious about who it permits into this country, it is a long step from this acceptable claim to his belief that Arabs and Muslims who come to the United States and challenge our ideals pose a threat to the American way of life and, in his words, "sap our civic spirit." Immigrants are protected by the Constitution and have the right and the obligation to be critical members of the American community.

The civil liberties of immigrants and naturalized citizens are at risk today. Civil liberties are most threatened not by vocal minorities, but when reasonable majorities accede to their violation.

JOHANN NEEM
Charlottesville, Virginia

Relative evil

TO THE EDITORS:

I was heartened to read that a new attitude has taken root in Israel since the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. ("Holy Terror," by Yossi Klein Halevi, October 15). This newfound unity is even more vital now, following the assassination of Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi. The media's scant coverage of this monumental event is revealing. Ze'evi, founder of the nationalist Moledet (Homeland) Party, became the first Israeli minister to be killed by Palestinians (see "Civil Right" by Yossi Klein Halevi, October 29). Would the media outlets have continued their nonstop coverage of the anthrax scare had a Bush administration cabinet member been gunned down by Islamic radicals? I doubt it.

The deafening silence is indicative of a growing sense of apathy shown by the media toward the very real plight of Israelis in their own land. It has become fashionable in many circles to distinguish between "bad" terrorists (those responsible for September 11) and "good" ones. This is a distinction without a difference. The media, by underreporting any acts that might make Palestinian terrorists "look bad," is complicit in perpetuating the sham of the "good" terrorist. By "relativizing" evil, the media serves as its mouthpiece.

GIDON BEN-ZVI
Studio City, California

Visitation rights

TO THE EDITORS:

Sam Tanenhaus's article "Outside In" correctly praises President Bush's handling of violent acts against Muslim Americans and warns against the enervating influence of Patrick Leahy, et al (October 8). As Americans, we inherit a democratic government, but we must grow into democratic minds. Not all Americans are yet truly democratic. That said, Leahy should not confuse the constitutional rights of Americans with the rights of noncitizens who are visiting this country. This is a critical distinction that is not being adequately addressed.

Visitors do not have a *right* to be here; they have a conditional permission extended by American generosity. Although every human has a right to civil treatment, visitors should not be included in the right to due process. If the FBI or the CIA have evidence, or even strong suspicions, that a guest means to hurt us, those agencies should be able to detain, question, and expel that "guest" in order to protect us. We're not harming these people by sending them home; we're protecting our right to decide who lives in ours.

FRED DINGS
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Columbia, South Carolina

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Past Imperfect

WITH ITS CAPTURE last week of Kabul, the Northern Alliance is no longer, in American eyes, the gang that couldn't shoot straight. But it is worth remembering that, on its own, the Alliance hadn't gained significant ground for five years. And that as recently as early November, despite weeks of American bombing, it was making no progress at all. What changed? Probably the deployment of U.S. ground troops, who plotted the Alliance offensive and guided the American bombing that paved its way.

To be sure, only Special Operations forces saw action last week. But that may change. The Taliban seem to be girding for a protracted guerrilla war. And it is unclear whether the United States has any proxy force in the South willing and able to flush them from their mountain caves. So despite this week's breathtaking good news, the war's hardest part may still be yet to come. And the harder this war gets, the more Americans will have to consider putting troops—including light infantry—on the ground.

And the more we consider it, the more critics will point to the Soviet analogy. The USSR, as we all know, sent close to 100,000 troops to fight a guerrilla war in Afghanistan; the country's fierce warriors and harsh landscape sent them back broken men. Why won't Americans meet the same fate?

For three reasons that haven't received enough attention. First, the Soviets weren't just fighting Afghanistan's mujahedin rebels; they were also fighting the United States and its allies. From 1979 to 1986, the mujahedin received $3 billion in outside assistance, mostly from Washington and Riyadh; the war represented the largest American covert operations effort of the cold war. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI)—the same guys who would later fight alongside the Taliban—fought alongside the mujahedin. Even China sold weapons to the rebels. And when the Soviets stepped up their efforts, so did the Americans. Early in the war, Moscow used Hind-D helicopter gunships—equipped with cannons, machine guns, and grenade launchers, and able to fly low into mountain passes—to attack the mujahedin. The lightly armed rebels were impotent to respond. As Stan Florer, a retired U.S. Army commander, told *USA Today*, "[The Russians] had completely taken apart the Mujahadin."

The Reagan administration famously responded by selling the Afghans Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, which forced the Soviet helicopters to fly much higher, undermining their effectiveness. The United States, working through Pakistan, also gave the mujahedin detailed satellite intelligence—including maps and photos of Soviet installations, and instructions on how best to attack them—which helped the rebels regain the offensive. As Harvard's Mark Kramer wrote in a recent paper for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Had it not been for the weapons, training and other support provided to the guerrillas by the United States, Saudi Arabia, China and Pakistan, Soviet troops undoubtedly would have been able to crush the resistance and achieve an outright victory."

The Taliban, needless to say, don't have a superpower on their side. The Russians, who possess a lot of residual knowledge about the network of caves and tunnels in which the Taliban (like the mujahedin before them) hide fighters and supplies, are sharing that knowledge with the United States. The Pakistani military may include rogue elements that support the Taliban but, at worst, it is playing a double game in which it helps both sides at once. The Soviet experience in Afghanistan—like our own experience in Vietnam—has burned into American consciousness the danger of taking on a popular, nationalist movement on its home soil. But neither movement could have humiliated a superpower had not the other superpower been quietly funneling it the money and arms to continue the fight.

Which suggests a second difference between America's nascent ground campaign in Afghanistan and the USSR's failed one: The Taliban are *not* a popular, nationalist movement in the way the mujahedin and Vietcong were. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan to prop up a deeply unpopular regime; indeed, it was a mass uprising, which began in March 1979 in Herat and then spread throughout the country, that helped force Moscow to send in the tanks. The United States, by contrast, is *fighting* a deeply unpopular regime. It's not just that Afghans resent Taliban oppression. The takeover of the government and the army by Arabs from Al Qaeda turned the Taliban, in the eyes of many Afghans, into a foreign occupier itself. When the Taliban fled Kabul, residents immediately began taking revenge on any Arabs they could find.

And there's a third difference—not between the mujahedin and the Taliban, but between the Soviet Union and us. The USSR's model for how to deal with a popular uprising against a Communist government was Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968: You roll your tanks down the capital city's wide boulevards and cow the people into submission. But Afghanistan doesn't have any wide boulevards; it consists of dirt roads and mountain passes—the kind of terrain that renders tanks useless. Most Afghans don't live in the capital or, for that matter, in any city at all. The lumbering, immobile Soviet army—each of its soldiers weighed down by 35 pounds of body armor—proved exceptionally ill-equipped to fight a guerrilla war.

And the Soviet troops weren't just ill-prepared for a guerrilla war; they were ill-prepared for any war. Most were conscripts with only a couple months of training. They lacked winter clothing and equipment for fighting at night. They faced shortages of food and water. It's not that the mujahedin were so lethal: Only 15,000 Soviet troops were killed. But Jed Babbin, undersecretary of defense in the first Bush administration, estimates that 420,000 were incapacitated by disease and injury. Hepatitis and typhoid ran rampant. None of this, needless to say, would prove nearly as big a problem for the American military—which has large numbers of highly mobile troops trained and equipped for mountain combat.

And the United States has something else the USSR did not: a just cause. The Soviet troops in Afghanistan, like many U.S. troops in Vietnam, were confused and cynical about the war they had been sent to fight. Drug abuse was common in both armies. Vietnam and Afghanistan were both, in different ways, imperial wars. But this is a war of self-defense—a war that began not with threats to a far-off regime, but with an attack on American soil. There is no counterpart, in America's war in Vietnam or the USSR's war in Afghanistan, to the pictures of firefighters that American commandos left at the Taliban bunker they raided last month near Kandahar. In those earlier wars, an advantage in firepower was negated by a deficiency in spirit. America today suffers no such deficiency. The critics who say America can't win a guerrilla war against the Taliban have grown so enthralled by the past fortitude of Afghanistan that they have overlooked the new fortitude of the United States.

PETER BEINART

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Taking Yes for an Answer

KABUL FELL AND the American government frowned. It would have been funny if it were not so sad. We are fighting a war with the right moral values and the wrong strategic principles. So before the American government becomes completely disconsolate about the prospect of American success, it is important to refresh our understanding of what we are doing in Central Asia.

We are not in Central Asia to liberate Afghanistan. The destruction of the Taliban is the corollary of our campaign in Afghanistan, the wonderful corollary: whatever the opposite of collateral damage is, this surely is it. It was thrilling to watch the men of Kabul shave their beards and the women of Kabul show their faces, thrilling in a supremely American way. We have brought this sort of good fortune to foreign places before. But Operation Enduring Freedom is not a humanitarian intervention, even if it is turning into a humanitarian accomplishment. (The atrocities committed by the Northern Alliance are deplorable, and the possibility of a countrywide collapse into civil war is real, but both those depredations pale before the cruelties of the Taliban regime.) We are in Afghanistan for the purpose of extirpating a terrorist organization that recently murdered thousands of Americans and would proudly do so again.

But we cannot destroy Osama bin Laden unless we destroy the Taliban. The Taliban are not only perfidious; they are also in our way. Thus the Taliban retreat from the North is an extraordinary development not only for moral reasons, but also for strategic reasons. This should be obvious, but it is not obvious. To an alarming degree, the Bush administration has entangled its war plans in its nation-building plans. The Q-word of last week—"quagmire"—has given way to the P-word of this week—"Pashtun"—as the new term of timidity. How can we rejoice at the fall of Kabul, if the Pashtun do not rejoice at the fall of Kabul?

There is no doubt, of course, that the tribal realities of Afghanistan are among its deepest political realities; and there is no doubt that the United States must do whatever it can to retain the allegiance of Pakistan, whose president is one of the few heroes of the hour. But surely Musharraf's decision to ally himself with the United States was based upon much more than the prospect of the eventual satisfaction of the Pashtuns. America's war against Al Qaeda has enabled Pakistan to reverse the momentous tilt toward India that was rapidly becoming a cornerstone of the Bush administration's foreign policy. Does anybody really believe that Musharraf will squander this unexpected and momentous improvement in his country's international position because of the squabbles of Afghanistan? It is profoundly in Pakistan's interest, as it is in the interests of the Pashtun themselves, to arrange for a government in Afghanistan that will not alter the new regional facts.

Just how brilliant do the diplomats of the United States think they are? They seem to believe that they can calibrate a place that is infamous for its lack of calibration. Their thinking about the political conditions for a military victory in Afghanistan has become rigid and dogmatic: they foolishly attempted to delay the fall of Kabul until their own plans for it could be met, once again giving Osama bin Laden the impression that we are reluctant warriors and hesitant victors. What happened in the North this week was not the United States unleashing the Northern Alliance; it was the Northern Alliance surprising the United States. And the United States could not bring itself to concede that this was a pleasant surprise.

Kabul fell not only as a consequence of American bombing, but also as a consequence of the deployment of American Special Forces on the ground. And there are now American Special Forces on the ground in the South, which gives us reason to hope for another Taliban rout. There is nothing like the presence of American soldiers and the absence of political legitimacy to bring a lousy government down. To be sure, there is still a long way to go. At this writing, the Taliban still hold the South, and some of them are dispersing into the mountains. It is almost winter. There is no inkling of the whereabouts of the billionaire with all that American blood on his hands. The Afghan factions are not yet taking the long and historically responsible view. But Kabul is free, and the grip of the theocrats upon the country has been loosened, and history in the Hindu Kush is plainly not on the side of jihad. So Colin Powell notwithstanding, this week we say: *mashallah*, and on to Kandahar. ■

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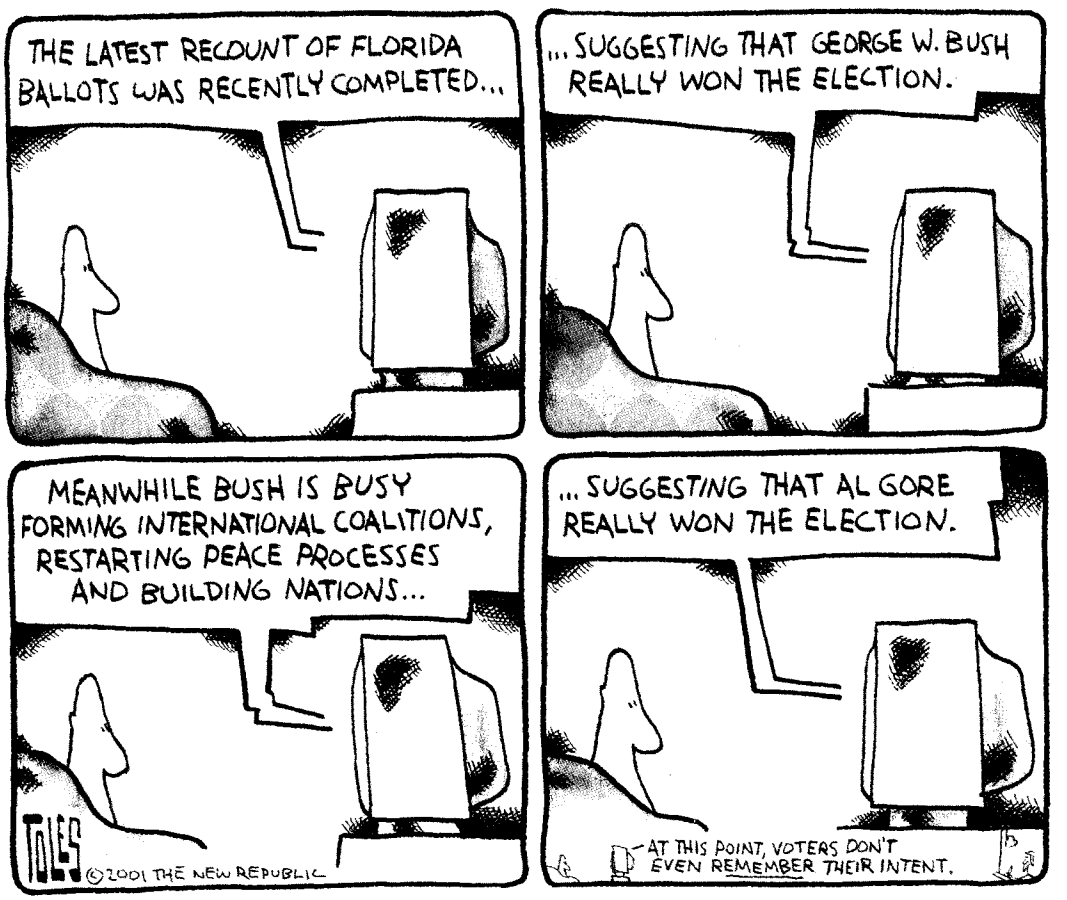
NOTEBOOK

IDIOCY WATCH, SPECIAL NORMAN MAILER EDITION: With humankind altogether hyperlinked, how is it that there are still people who do not expect to be overheard? Perhaps Norman Mailer thought that a shabby outburst delivered in the Netherlands and covered (it appears) only by *NRC Handelsblad*, the leading Dutch newspaper, would escape the attention of his fellow countrymen. Well, no such luck. So we are less than delighted to report—no, we are delighted to report it, since it confirms our long-standing sense of the essential meretriciousness of this man's mind—that Mailer addressed the following observations to an audience at the Cross Border Festival in Amsterdam on October 29 (because these comments were translated from English to Dutch, then back to English, they may vary from the originals): "The WTC was not just an architectural monstrosity, but also terrible for people who didn't work there, for it said to all those people: 'If you can't work up here, boy, you're out of it.' That's why I'm sure that if those towers had been destroyed without loss of life, a lot of people would have cheered. Everything wrong with America led to the point where the country built that tower of Babel, which consequently had to be destroyed." *Had to be destroyed*: 5,000 deaths were just the collateral damage of a perfectly understandable act of social and architectural criticism. And Mailer continued: "And then came the next shock. We had to realize that the people that did this were brilliant. It showed that the ego we could hold up until September 10 was inadequate." It does not come as a surprise to discover that Mailer regards the conflict between Al Qaeda and the United States as a duel of egos. The tough guy has always viewed history as a dick thing. And he continued: "Americans can't admit that you need courage to do such a thing. For that might be misunderstood. The key thing is that we in America are convinced that it was blind, mad fanatics who didn't know what they were doing. But what if those perpetrators were right and we were not? We have long ago lost the capability to take a calm look at the enormity of our enemy's position." Again the confusion of right with enormity. In what sense, though, are thousands of innocent and incinerated people "wrong"? And does Norman Mailer really believe that the perpetrators may have been "right"? Nothing in his long career of stupid and indecent extenuations of other people's pain rules out the possibility that he believes it. But the fearless American writer should not sneak around to the far corners of the world to express his bold views. He should make his dissent at home, where it matters, and where it can get his name into a lot of newspapers that the people who lunch at the Four Seasons can read.

IDIOCY WATCH, CONT'D: "What do you call someone who believes so firmly in the promise of salvation through a set of rigid rules that they are willing to risk their own life to spread those rules? A religious fanatic? A holy warrior? How about a US trade negotiator? Tomorrow, the World Trade Organisation begins its meeting in Doha, Qatar. According to US security briefings, there is reason to believe that al-Qaida, which has plenty of fans in the Gulf state, has managed to get some of its operatives into the country, including an explosives specialist. Given these threats, you might think that the US and WTO would have cancelled their meeting. But not these true believers.... Trade negotiations are all about power and opportunity and for kamikaze capitalists, terrorism is just another opportunity for leverage."—Naomi Klein, *The Guardian*, November 8

"That we dreamed of this event [the September 11 attacks], that every person without exception dreamed of it, because


THE LATEST RECOUNT OF FLORIDA BALLOTS WAS RECENTLY COMPLETED...
...SUGGESTING THAT GEORGE W. BUSH REALLY WON THE ELECTION.
MEANWHILE BUSH IS BUSY FORMING INTERNATIONAL COALITIONS, RESTARTING PEACE PROCESSES AND BUILDING NATIONS...
...SUGGESTING THAT AL GORE REALLY WON THE ELECTION.
TOLES ©2001 THE NEW REPUBLIC
AT THIS POINT, VOTERS DON'T EVEN REMEMBER THEIR INTENT.

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no one could refrain from dreaming of the destruction of any power that has become so hegemonic: this is unacceptable to the Western moral conscience, but it is regardless a fact, which corresponds directly to the pathetic violence of all the speeches that would efface it. Really, it was they who did it, but it was we who wanted it. If one doesn't take this into account, the event loses its entire symbolic dimension, it's a pure accident, a purely arbitrary act, the murderous phantasmagoria of a few fanatics, whom it would be sufficient to suppress. But we know well that it isn't so. Hence all the counter-phobic delirium of exorcising evil: that's what is, everywhere, a hidden object of desire."—Jean Baudrillard, *Le Monde*, November 2

THE LOBBYIST AS PATRIOT: "I wouldn't be doing the job—not necessarily for my clients—but for my country if I wasn't being helpful in terms of offering ideas that can be helpful in stimulating the economy."—Kenneth J. Kies, lobbyist for Pricewaterhouse Coopers, explaining why it would have been "irresponsible" for him not to seek a provision in the stimulus bill that would reduce overseas taxes on clients such as GE and IBM, *The Washington Post*, November 11

MIAMI VICE: Nobody should be surprised that advisers to President Bush and former Vice President Al Gore are furiously spinning the just-released Florida recount results. That's what politicians do. But what's *The Miami Herald*'s excuse? As you may recall, the *Herald*, working with *USA Today* and some other Florida newspapers, commissioned its own recount of the disputed Florida ballots and published its results six months ago. One reason the *Herald* recount came out first is that its review did not consider "overvotes"—i.e., ballots on which people had selected more than one candidate, made extra marks, or both marked a candidate's box and written in his name. At the time, the *Herald* justified this decision by noting that Gore never sought to include overvotes in the recount and that going through them might get, well, expensive. "Overvotes were never an issue in the election," a *Herald* editor told *kausfiles.com*, adding that the paper wasn't "going to pay some accountant $110 an hour to look at the overvotes." But now we know that overvotes were, in fact, a crucial factor in the result: Had there been a statewide recount including overvotes, the national media consortium found, Gore would have won. What's more, the *Orlando Sentinel* has reported that the judge overseeing the recount might very well have included overvotes, notwithstanding Gore's legal appeal, thus tipping the state's vote and, in turn, the presidential election. Pretty embarrassing, right? Not to the *Herald*. In its story summarizing the latest recount findings, the newspaper declared victory: "The findings of the $900,000 review are virtually identical to the conclusions reached six months ago in a separate review conducted by *The Herald*." Several paragraphs into the story, the *Herald* acknowledged the overvote issue, but glossed over the difference between the studies by saying "Most overvotes would have gone to Gore, both studies concluded"—apparently referring to some anecdotal reporting and statistical projections to this effect that the *Herald* had published, as if that were the same thing. Memo to Miami: Next time, just admit you goofed.

WE'VE PUT TOGETHER A COALITION TO RULE AFGHANISTAN REPRESENTING ALL THE TRIBES BUT NONE OF THE PAST ATROCITIES.
GREAT! WHERE DID YOU FIND THEM?? WHEN DO YOU UNVEIL THEM?
ANYTIME, LADIES.
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THEY WERE HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT.

OOPS: "Of all the proxies the United States has enlisted over the past half-century, the Northern Alliance may be the least prepared to attain America's battlefield objectives."—TNR, November 19 issue ■

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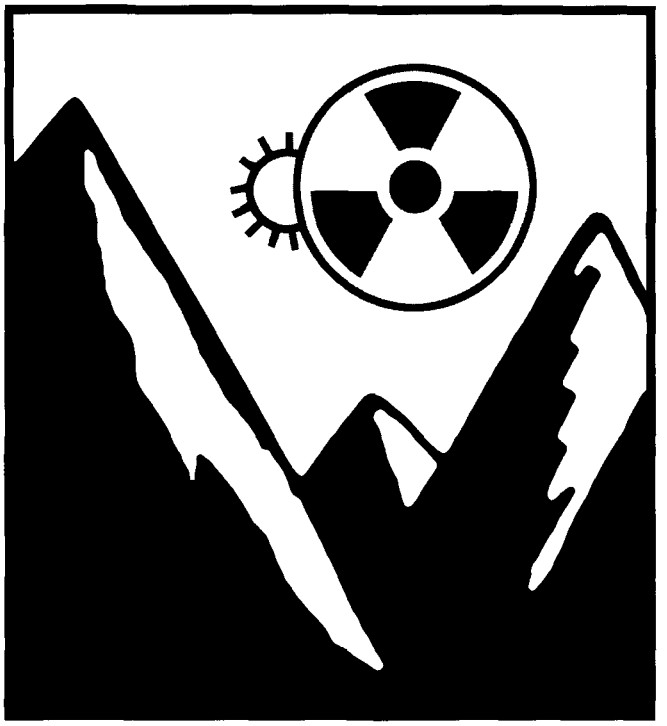

On the Hill

Waste Away

By MICHAEL CROWLEY

IN THE WEEKS since September 11, the United States has frantically inventoried every conceivable target of terrorist attacks. Few seem as tempting as the nation's nuclear power plants—103 potential Chernobyls from coast to coast. But, as terrifying as an attack on a nuclear reactor would be, there's something that worries public safety experts even more: the 40,000 tons of spent nuclear fuel stored at plants around the nation. While reactor cores are housed in fortified casings designed to withstand earthquakes, tornadoes, and maybe even plane crashes, most nuclear waste is stored in flimsy buildings that are often little more than simple concrete warehouses. There's no good reason why: Spent nuclear fuel is just as deadly as a reactor core—and it's often deadlier. Last year a Nuclear Regulatory Commission report concluded that a major explosion of spent fuel could lead to a lethal radiation dose far worse than the fallout from the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, rendering the surrounding area uninhabitable for thousands of years.

But don't blame malevolent nuclear power barons for this sorry state of affairs. The federal government long ago vowed to store America's nuclear waste in a safe and secure location far from large populations. For the past 20 years, however, textbook NIMBY politics on Capitol Hill have stymied that effort. One nuclear expert calls it a tale of "social Darwinism" in which powerful members of Congress have repeatedly protected their own states, shunting off the problem onto those represented by weaker colleagues. In 1987 it was determined that the shuntee would be Nevada, whose Yucca Mountain would hold all the nation's nuclear waste. But, since then, the state's senior senator, Harry Reid, has become the number-two Democrat in the Senate. And he has used every ounce of his clout to send the waste debate back to square one. Which is where—national security be damned—it seems likely to stay.

The government has been worrying about how to dispose of nuclear waste since the 1950s. Early ideas included dumping canisters of waste at sea, freezing them in Arctic ice, or firing them into space. For a time there were plans to recycle spent fuel through special reactors, but the Carter administration rejected the procedure, fearing that it would create masses of plutonium, which could be used to build nuclear weapons. Finally, the government decided to simply bury the waste deep underground. In 1982 Congress passed a law authorizing a search for sites, with disposal to begin by 1998.

The legislation was possible only thanks to a wary regional compromise that ensured one waste site in the East and one in the West. But once the Department of Energy began sniffing around specific states, the fragile deal quickly fell apart. In the early 1980s, for instance, when then-Democratic Senator John Stennis discovered that a storage site was being considered in Mississippi, he convened a special committee hearing to berate Energy Department officials. According to nuclear waste specialist Robert Alvarez, who attended the hearing, it turned out that the site that so upset Stennis was located near property owned by his sister. The plan was abandoned.

That was only the beginning. In 1986 Energy Department scientists named Texas, Washington, and Nevada as possible Western burial grounds, and announced that they were also exploring the benefits of storing waste in granite, which is especially prevalent in Northeastern states like Maine and New Hampshire. On Capitol Hill, primal self-preservation instincts quickly kicked in. Maine's George Mitchell, who would become Senate majority leader the next year, pushed an amendment in 1987 barring even the consideration of granite storage. New Hampshire had no equivalent powerhouse congressman, but the Granite State does hold the nation's first presidential primary, making Mitchell's amendment politically unstoppable. Meanwhile, House Speaker Jim Wright of Texas and his soon-to-be successor, Tom Foley of Washington, helped to bump their states off the list. The result was legislation, crafted with what *The New York Times* called "stunning abruptness" and tucked into a $600 billion budget bill, that singled out Nevada's barren Yucca Mountain as the only site the government could consider.

NEVADANS UNDERSTANDABLY DUBBED the measure the "Screw Nevada" bill, complaining that their political impotence had been exploited. The state's then-little-known junior senator, Harry Reid, fumed that the process amounted to "base, raw power politics." And, ever since, he has made defeating Yucca his holy mission in Washington—vowing, at one point, to be "on top of the Capitol doing a full body dive" before giving up the fight.

He hasn't had to. Instead, Reid has turned to the same power politics he denounced in 1987. In 1992 he and his

IGOR KOPELNITSKY

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Releasing the "Confirmation Hostages"

Bill Whalen is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution.

The attacks of September 11 exposed the federal government's need to enact critical reform, most notably in intelligence gathering, domestic security, and military preparedness.

Not to be overlooked is another improvement that is long overdue in Washington: revamping the current appointments process, which compromises the federal government's ability to respond to crises and to carry out core functions in times of both war and peace.

On the day of the attacks only 110 of 148 Senate-confirmed positions—related either directly or indirectly to America's war on terrorism—had been filled. That 74 percent rate is far better than the federal government as a whole, which had only 58 percent of its Senate-confirmed jobs filled as of September 11. Neither is an acceptable standard. The first figure reflects a mediocre "gentleman's C"; the second, a failure.

The political gamesmanship that taints the appointments process continues to worsen, even though the executive and legislative branches of government have changed partisan hands. By Ronald Reagan's seventh month in office, nearly 90 percent of his nominees had been confirmed; for Bill Clinton, the confirmation rate over the same period was 87 percent. But for George W. Bush, that rate has fallen to 81 percent. That's not progress.

How can Washington remedy this situation? One option is adopting the California model of state government appointments.

Like the president, California's governor has appointees who require confirmation by the State Senate. But the rules differ in Sacramento. Once a nomination is announced, an appointee can immediately exercise the full authority of the office instead of waiting to be empowered by the Senate. However, there's a catch. If the State Senate fails to act on the nomination within a year, the nominee is required to resign.

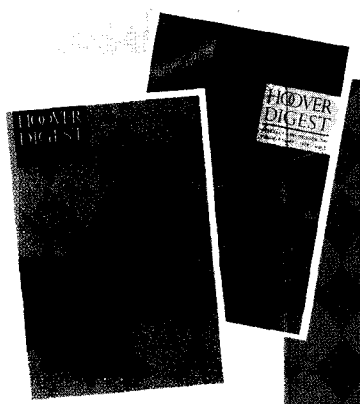
By giving nominees full and immediate authority, a new administration could hit the ground running instead of being at the Senate's mercy for an indefinite amount of time. If the Senate strongly objected to the nominee, it would speed up the confirmation process rather than let it languish.

There are two other ancillary benefits to consider. First, some members of Congress regard appointees as "hostages" only to be "released" (i.e., confirmed) in exchange for a ransom payment from the White House, usually in the form of more government spending. Taking away this leverage could be a way to enforce genuine fiscal discipline. Second, consider those nominees rejected solely on ideological grounds. If the Senate failed to act on a nomination for an entire year, it would be under pressure to demonstrate that its judgment was based on a nominee's competency, rather than partisan differences.

Washington has spoken loudly since September 11, promising a new spirit of unity. Why not reform the appointments process so that the real winners are Americans who believe that integrity rules the day in our nation's capital?

— Bill Whalen

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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former colleague Richard Bryan stalled a Senate energy bill for days with the first of many filibusters to come, complaining that Nevada was getting "shafted" by pro-Yucca language. Another filibuster in 1996 grew so bitter that Senate leader Trent Lott fumed at Reid and Bryan in an unusual floor speech. "[Nuclear waste] is all over America. What about the other 48 senators that are directly involved in this nuclear waste issue?" railed an exasperated Lott, who finally had to calm himself down: "Sorry to get carried away there." When lack of progress at Yucca led Congress to consider setting up an interim, aboveground waste dump at the site, Reid killed the idea year after year. With the threat of a Clinton veto overhead, Reid used a combination of arm-twisting and doomsday warnings that transporting waste across the country to Nevada could cause riots and disaster in his fellow senators' states.

Indeed, Reid has mounted a skillful public relations campaign to convince Americans that the project is their problem, too. In 1998 he toured the country—stopping in Denver, St Louis, Indianapolis, and Chicago—to warn of a possible "mobile Chernobyl" if waste were transported to Nevada by truck or train. Reid's Senate website includes a map showing several possible routes, complete with state-by-state detail. By 1998 Reid had so firmly identified himself with the anti-Yucca crusade that when then-Representative John Ensign challenged his seat, Reid declared, "You send Ensign to the Senate, you send nuclear waste to Nevada."

But it was the Democrats' recapture of the Senate last spring that may have sealed Yucca's fate forever. Reid played a central role in convincing Vermont Senator Jim Jeffords to abandon the GOP—even heroically ceding the Environment Committee chairmanship he would have inherited to Jeffords. The switch did, however, make Reid chairman of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee, with direct power over the Yucca budget—which Reid has already begun to slash. Reid has also used his new perch to stall three Bush Energy Department nominees whom he considered pro-Yucca. (Last year, Bush was considering former Louisiana Senator J. Bennett Johnston—who oversaw Congress's 1987 choice of Yucca—to be Energy secretary; when Reid heard the news, he said he couldn't wait to get to the office to call Johnston, whose nomination he vowed to kill.) And in coaxing Jeffords across the aisle, Reid also won the deep gratitude of his Democratic colleagues and, in particular, Senator Majority Leader Tom Daschle. Within days of the Senate changeover, Daschle showed up at a fund-raiser for Reid, saying of the Yucca project, "As long as we're in the majority, it's dead."

WHICH IS UNFORTUNATE. Because while Yucca Mountain may have been a political choice, it wasn't a bad one scientifically. After years of study, a Department of Energy report completed last summer determined that the mountain, which rises from the desert about 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas, is safe for long-term waste storage. The mountain rock, produced by ancient volcanoes, is especially stable and dry, minimizing the risk that radioactive material might seep into water streams. Federal scientists project very low levels of radiation exposure for the area's small population, vastly less than what an average person is exposed to from the sun and from the potassium in bananas. And, even when radiation levels peak from leakage in the year 622010 (no, that's not a typo), they'll still amount to less than one-third of average background radiation, which causes no harm.

As storage concerns have receded, Reid has increasingly focused on transportation risks. But the Energy Department says waste can be transported in nearly indestructible containers. And it says there are no good alternatives. Reid has proposed keeping radioactive material in specially designed concrete casks at their current sites. But such casks are only a short-term solution; the waste will remain deadly for much longer than the man-made containers are destined to last. Casks also mean the waste will stay in populated areas with diffuse oversight.

The Bush administration hasn't given up the fight for Yucca and is expected to give it an official go-ahead later this year. In Nevada some heretic politicos have even suggested the state stop fighting and make the best of the situation. As Democratic state Senator Joe Neal bluntly put it to *National Journal* in 1998, "We should demand large amounts of cash." But Reid—though wary of acting with "a heavy hand" in the wake of September 11, according to Alvarez—is unmoved. And he has one more card to play. Assuming Bush approves the Yucca site, the decision will face one last vote by Congress. Reid can count on his friend Daschle's political muscle, along with the deep pockets of the casino industry, which fears that if Nevada becomes the nuclear waste state, Las Vegas tourism will suffer. It's quite possible, therefore, that in a lightning-swift, dead-of-night maneuver, some other poor, defenseless state will be volunteered in the name of national security. Best of luck, Arkansas. ■

Why the recount isn't good news for Bush.

Count Down

By JONATHAN CHAIT

NOW THAT A consortium of major newspapers has reported that George W. Bush would have won the Florida recount, his legitimacy is supposedly beyond dispute. "Even Gore partisans," asserts a *Wall Street Journal* editorial, "now have to admit that the former Vice President was not denied a legitimate victory by the Supreme Court." And this conclusion is not confined to Bush's amen corner. "The comprehensive review of the uncounted Florida ballots solidifies George W. Bush's legal claim to the White House," chimes in *The New York Times*.

So Bush is now a legitimate president, right? Well, it depends on how you define the term. Legally, of course, he is. The *Times* seems to be referring to this kind of legitimacy

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when it maintains that the recount strengthens Bush's "legal claim" to the presidency. Yet that makes no sense. Even before the media recount, Bush had received a majority of the votes in the electoral college, been sworn in as president, and been recognized as such by the opposition party. A newspaper recount couldn't possibly bolster his *legal* claim to the White House. What the *Times* presumably means is that the recount strengthens his *moral* claim. But, by this definition of legitimacy, the recount doesn't strengthen Bush's claim. It undermines it.

Ever since *Bush* v. *Gore*, the White House has defended the peculiar manner in which Bush ascended to the presidency by refusing to discuss it at all. When asked to comment on the newspaper recount, Bush's press secretary, Ari Fleischer, scoffed, "The voters settled this election last fall, and the nation moved on a long time ago." But the voters didn't really settle the election. Nationally, the candidate who received the most votes lost. Even in Florida, it is beyond question that more voters preferred Gore than Bush. The butterfly ballot in Palm Beach County and confusing voter instructions in Duval County, along with other problems, cost Gore tens of thousands of votes. Bush won the presidency not because the system worked, but because it failed.

THE FACT THAT the system failed—that more Florida voters preferred Gore—does not by itself undermine Bush's moral legitimacy, however. Elections are determined by votes—not by the will of the voters—and if Florida voters failed, in their error and confusion, to give Gore a majority of clearly intended votes, then the state's electoral votes should rightfully go to Bush. But this is exactly why the newspaper recount matters: It demonstrates that this is not the case. The newspapers found that a thorough statewide recount of clearly intended votes would have resulted in a narrow Gore victory.

This fact seems to have so traumatized Bush supporters that they have blocked it out of their minds. "Mr. Gore could only have prevailed," asserts the *Journal*, "if every Florida county had been ordered to count its ballots under a broad, vague 'voter intent' standard that Mr. Gore himself never requested." The *Journal* editors' confusion results from the consortium's discovery that the great bulk of uncounted Gore votes came from "overvotes"—ballots in which the box next to Gore's name was punched and was also written in. Such ballots were not counted by the machines—which invalidated them for casting two different votes—but as a standard of voter intent, they are anything but broad and vague.

One of the main conservative arguments against recounts in Florida was that they depended on counting "undervotes"—ballots in which voting machines detected no candidate preference. Conservatives argued that examining such ballots opened the door to the "manufacture" of votes out of dimpled chads, or the subjective judgments of partisan canvassing boards. But the newspaper study found that Gore didn't need any of these problematic undervotes to win a recount. Merely counting those ballots in which voter intent can be clearly and objectively discerned would have done the trick.

THE *JOURNAL* AND other commentators also note that a recount confined to the four counties selected by Gore would have given Bush a victory. The *Times* makes much of this fact—explaining that Bush "would have won under the ground rules prescribed by Democrats." Since Gore tried to cherry-pick favorable counties, the logic goes, he got what he asked for. Except that Gore *didn't* actually get what he asked for. He requested a liberal standard of voter intent, but Palm Beach—acting on the advice of Katherine Harris's lawyer—imposed a narrow standard instead. More importantly, Gore did belatedly ask Bush to agree to a statewide count, and Bush refused the offer.

But even if none of this were true—even if Gore had never asked for what the Florida voters deserved—it would not make what happened any less of a travesty. The important rights at stake, after all, are those of the voters, not those of the candidates. And the voters have a right to the most accurate determination of their intent possible—regardless of which candidate has the better legal staff.

Finally, the newspapers concluded that the statewide hand count underway in Florida—the one halted by the U.S. Supreme Court—would have given Bush the presidency anyway. The papers splashed this conclusion atop their stories—"FLORIDA RECOUNTS WOULD HAVE FAVORED BUSH," blared *The Washington Post* in a typical headline. And Bush supporters have seized on this point to conclude that the Court ruled correctly in *Bush* v. *Gore*—as the *Journal* puts it, "a judgment more than vindicated by the media recount." The newspapers, however, are wrong in their assessment of their own recount. Why? Because they presuppose that the statewide count ordered by the Florida Supreme Court would have been confined to undervotes. But the *Orlando Sentinel* reports that several counties were counting *overvotes*, too. Moreover, the judge assigned to run the statewide count told the *Sentinel* that he might well have ordered canvassing boards to examine the overvotes. Since overvotes, as we know now, slant significantly in Gore's favor, then Gore might very well have won the recount had the Supreme Court not stopped it prematurely.

Of course, even if Bush would have won the recount, that didn't justify the Court's decision. At the time, nobody knew who would win the recount, but everybody knew it was Gore's only chance of victory. The trouble with *Bush* v. *Gore* was that it distorted the law to bring about a desired political outcome. (Alternatively, if you believe *Bush* v. *Gore* got the law right, as the *Journal* does, then a subsequent recount wouldn't "vindicate" it.) That the Court's intervention may, in retrospect, have been unnecessary hardly exonerates it. You're no less guilty of burglary if you break into a bank vault that turns out to be empty.

The media's impulse to exonerate Bush is understandable. Nobody wants to appear sour or partisan, or to shatter the unity necessary to prosecute the war on terrorism. But accepting the finality of the election and unifying against enemies abroad does not necessarily conflict with the idea that the president holds office due to bungling compounded by deliberate wrongdoing. We really ought to be able to hold both ideas in our heads at once. ■

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The new bioterrorism czar's old mistakes.

Search and Destroy

By JOSHUA MICAH MARSHALL

WHEN SECRETARY OF Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson announced that he was appointing Dr. Donald A. Henderson as his bioterrorism czar earlier this month, you could almost hear the collective sigh of relief. After all, who better to defend the country against biological attack than Henderson, the grand old man of smallpox eradication, who led the successful World Health Organization (WHO) effort to wipe out the disease in the 1960s and 1970s? *The Boston Globe* described Henderson as "one of the giants in public health"; Thompson himself boasted that Henderson's appointment completed a "scientific dream team" and noted that "his distinguished record speaks for itself."

Which is true enough, insofar as it goes. The problem is that Henderson's efforts didn't stop with the eradication of smallpox in nature. For years now Henderson has also been bent on eradicating smallpox in the lab, as the leading advocate of destroying the last-known government stocks of the virus—an irreversible step that most experts believe would have prevented medical advances critical to defending against a smallpox attack. "Destroying the smallpox virus would have been the single largest mistake that I can think of as far as counterterrorism or counterproliferation is concerned," says Al Zelicoff, a physician and senior scientist at the Center for National Security and Arms Control at Sandia National Laboratories. In other words, before assuming his new role as director of the Office of Public Health Preparedness, Henderson spent the better part of the last decade pushing an agenda that would have left the country much less prepared for a terrorist attack on public health.

A decade ago most policymakers and research scientists agreed that the last two WHO-approved laboratory stocks of smallpox virus—one at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, and another at the Vektor Institute in Siberia—should eventually be destroyed. But destroying them only made sense if they *really were* the only two supplies left. Otherwise, destroying existing supplies might put the public health community at a critical disadvantage in developing new smallpox vaccines and antiviral medications in the event of a biological attack. What if other countries were hiding additional, illicit stocks of smallpox virus in their biological weapons arsenals?

And, over the course of the 1990s, evidence mounted that indeed they were. Not only did it become clear that the former Soviet Union (and later Russia) had stockpiled large quantities of smallpox, but there were clear—though by no means conclusive—signs that countries such as North Korea might have acquired supplies as well. Over time, that information brought most pro-destruction advocates over to the pro-retention side.

But not Donald Henderson. For years Henderson either disputed or disparaged the growing evidence of smallpox proliferation, making himself a thorn in the sides of defense and counterterrorism experts who believed smallpox constituted a serious bioterrorism threat. When evidence of proliferation grew overwhelming in the late 1990s, Henderson shifted gears and began arguing that only by destroying our own supply of smallpox could the United States garner the moral authority to persuade countries like Russia or North Korea to do the same. Retaining the virus, Henderson wrote in 1999, "would provide the argument for various countries to obtain the smallpox virus for their own studies. Possibly, the smallpox virus could be disseminated to many laboratories, including ones in Iraq and North Korea." Even today he ridicules the national security arguments for holding onto America's supplies of the virus. "There's a great desire on the part of [the Department of Defense] to justify retaining the smallpox virus," he told *Science* magazine just last month. "And that's what it all boils down to."

THE KEY QUESTION in the smallpox-retention debate is whether having stores of the virus on hand would aid the development of improved vaccines and critical antiviral medications. "It became clear to me [in the course of research conducted in the mid-1990s] that loss of the virus would eliminate opportunities to develop new drugs," says David Franz, former commander of the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID). For his part, Henderson (who declined to be interviewed for this article) has argued that the established smallpox vaccine is sufficient to defend against a possible bioterrorism-related smallpox outbreak, and that research on new drugs and vaccines would be either unworkable or prohibitively costly.

But others point out that the established vaccine suffers from two major flaws: It can prove fatal to those with suppressed immune systems and, in the case of a bioterrorist attack, would provide immunity to those infected only if they were vaccinated within days of exposure. "We need antiviral drugs as well," says Zelicoff, "for the people who can't take the vaccine ... and those who don't get it in time."

The current smallpox vaccine is a "live virus" vaccine. That means when you get inoculated, you are exposed to an actual virus—in this case, *vaccinia*, a close variant of the virus that causes cowpox, the bovine analog of smallpox. A person with a healthy immune system can fight off the disease and, in so doing, acquire an immunity to the far-deadlier smallpox virus. But in a person with a suppressed immune system, *vaccinia* can produce serious or even fatal illness. And that fact is far more important today

JOSHUA MICAH MARSHALL is editor of the *Talking Points Memo* (*www.j-marshall.com/talk*).

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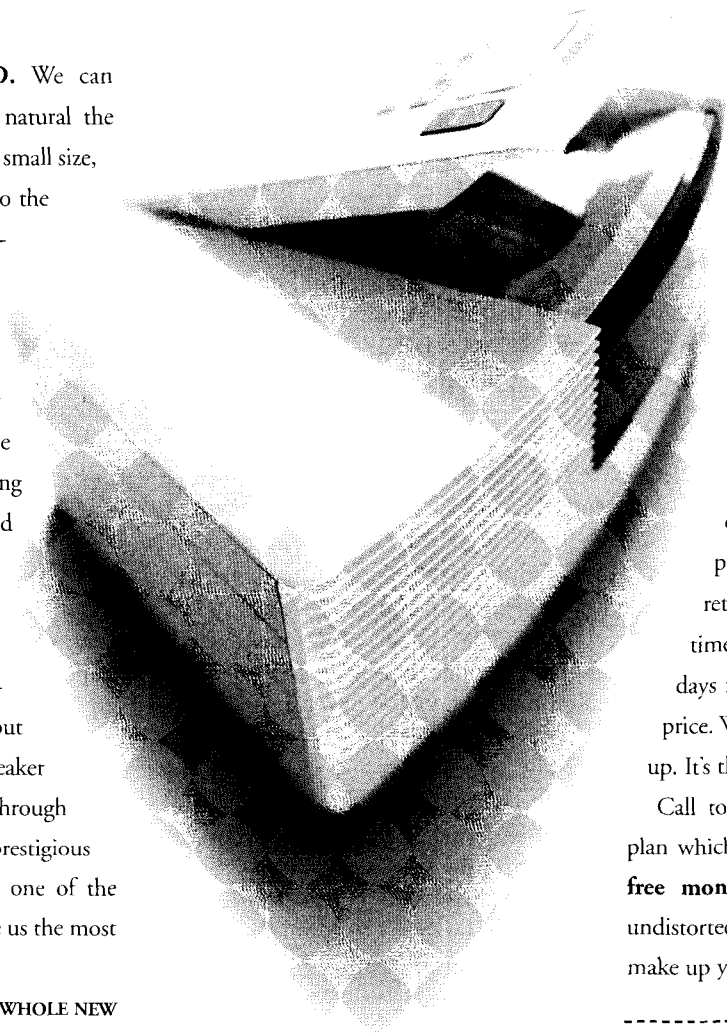

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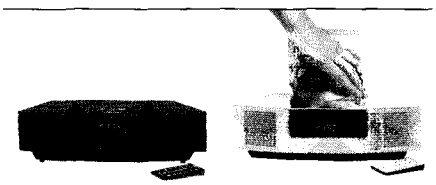

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than it was when Americans were last routinely inoculated because, over the past 30 years, the percentage of the population with suppressed immune systems has risen dramatically. AIDS patients, chemotherapy patients, and anyone with an organ transplant would find themselves among the millions of Americans unable to receive the vaccine. (It's even possible that people with immunosuppression could contract the *vaccinia* virus through close contact with healthy people who had been recently inoculated.) The best hope for the immunosuppressed population probably lies in high-tech antiviral drugs—the kind Henderson says we don't need.

Antivirals would likely also play a critical role in protecting the healthy population. Under current government plans, public health authorities would try to stamp out a bioterrorism smallpox outbreak by initiating mass inoculations in the affected area. But the smallpox vaccine only offers protection if it is administered within three to four days of exposure. Given smallpox's long incubation period, it's likely many individuals would have gone longer than three days since exposure once the first signs of an outbreak appeared. Preliminary research by scientists at USAMRIID suggests that antiviral drugs would be effective longer into the course of the illness. The same researchers also believe that antiviral drugs would be useful against genetically manipulated strains of smallpox that the *vaccinia*-based vaccine might be powerless to control.

WHEN THE DESTRUCTION question was last debated inside the U.S. government in 1999, Henderson downplayed the possibility that antiviral drug research would ever pan out or improve on the protection offered by the established vaccine. In a 1999 editorial in *The Baltimore Sun*, he called developing such new drugs neither "likely nor practical" and said it would be impossible to develop new treatments because scientists would not be able to find an animal species on which such drugs could be accurately tested.

But subsequent research has belied both those predictions. Since 1999 researchers from USAMRIID working at the CDC have used the live smallpox virus to isolate twelve potential antiviral drugs that work against smallpox in lab experiments. "We've made a lot of progress toward developing antiviral drugs working with the virus since 1999," says a senior Clinton administration official closely involved in the 1999 debate. "If we would have destroyed it then it would have stopped us dead in our tracks."

Moreover, last year a USAMRIID researcher, Dr. Peter Jahrling, discovered and is now refining a so-called "animal model" for smallpox, which should facilitate precisely the sort of animal trials Henderson said would be impossible. As Sandia National Laboratories' Zelicoff puts it, "As a result of having the smallpox virus, we have done two things that experts said would be impossible ... we've identified an entire series of antiviral drugs, [and] we now have a plausible animal model ... that will enable us to test those drugs." No thanks to the new director of the Office of Public Health Preparedness. ■

A Middle East proxy war in New Hampshire.

Foreign Aid

By FRANKLIN FOER

SINCE SEPTEMBER 11, former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has experienced something of an American renaissance. He has become a regular on the Fox News Channel and CNN, and he testified before the House Government Reform Committee. His book, *Fighting Terrorism*, has suddenly appeared on best-seller lists across the country. Nonetheless, on November 2 Bibi found time to break away from the TV and lecture circuit to head to Manchester, New Hampshire, for a local town-hall meeting at St. Anselm, a 2,000-student Catholic college.

Netanyahu didn't trek to New Hampshire just to talk terrorism. He went to boost the reelection chances of Republican Senator Bob Smith, who is fending off a primary challenge from John E. Sununu. Sununu is the son of George H.W.'s chief of staff and is the only ethnic Palestinian in Congress, and Netanyahu would like to keep Sununu's anti-Israel voting record out of the Senate. Smith, for his part, hopes to use Sununu's pro-Palestinian sympathies to paint him as soft on terrorism. As one of Smith's advisers told me, "People are just beginning to focus on how pro-Arab [Sununu] is and how naïve his positions are on the terrorism issue." The Netanyahu visit is part of Smith's ongoing effort to get them to focus even more. Which means that until primary day next September, New Hampshire will be like Ramallah—another front in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Even before September 11 and the emergence of the terrorism issue, the primary promised to be ugly. Smith, with his combination of conservative zealotry and sheer buffoonery, has long been vulnerable. In 1995, for example, he used scissors and an anatomically correct doll to demonstrate partial-birth abortion on the Senate floor. Before a one-year anniversary celebration of the Contract with America, he fulminated against the GOP leadership for bringing Ringling Bros. elephants to the Capitol grounds, risking a stampede. (To prove his point, he brandished a photo of a bloody, rampaging elephant from Hawaii that had been shot 100 times.)

But it was Smith's 2000 presidential run that turned Republican leaders against him. After his quest for the GOP nomination fell embarrassingly flat, he bolted to the U.S. Taxpayers Party—but not before delivering a lengthy farewell tirade on the Senate floor. "Maybe [the Republicans are] a party in the sense of wearing hats and blowing whistles, but it's not a party that means anything," he fumed. Melodrama quickly turned to farce, however: Just four months after his defection, Smith was enticed back into the GOP fold with an offer to chair the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

Now Smith is paying the price for his apostasy. Even

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though he stands among the Senate's most resolute movement conservatives, the movement has turned its back on him. Last year Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform accorded Smith "hero" status for scoring 90 percent on its litmus test. But that hasn't stopped Norquist from raising money for Sununu and telling *The Weekly Standard* in April that "Bob Smith betrayed the conservative movement by whoring after the environmentalists.... The Republican Party and the conservative movement should say, 'Thank you very much; it's time for you to retire.'" And, while other prominent Republicans have been less bombastic, they've been just as clear. Over the summer Sununu received blessings and checks from such GOP eminences as Haley Barbour, Bob Dole, George H.W. Bush, and Susan Molinari. Even Smith's fellow senators, who as a rule protect their own, haven't lifted a finger for their colleague; two of them, Kit Bond and Richard Shelby, have even endorsed Sununu. And, according to a report last month in *Roll Call*, Smith was seen in a Capitol cloakroom chewing out Senator Bill Frist, the head of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, for the party's tepid support. One senator bluntly told the Capitol Hill newspaper, "I don't think [he] has a friend up here."

Things didn't look much better for Smith at home. A poll in May showed Sununu leading among registered New Hampshire voters by 21 percent. But, as New Hampshire Democratic political consultant Mark Longabaugh says of Smith, "He's tenacious, especially when he's down." And, on September 11, Smith found an issue with legs: terrorism. "After the attacks, he really found his voice," says John McLaughlin, Smith's pollster.

Unfortunately for Sununu, his past voting record leaves him vulnerable to Smith's attacks. Sununu has been one of the Palestinian Authority's most reliable allies in Congress, even voting against a 1999 resolution that urged the PA to tamp down violence. That same year he opposed a resolution condemning efforts by the Palestinians (including Hamas and Hezbollah) to justify attacks against Israel with the Geneva Convention. And he voted against a resolution imploring the State Department to demand information from Lebanon and Syria about the whereabouts of Israeli MIAs. In other words, he's following in his father's footsteps. Among the nation's governors, only the senior Sununu refused to endorse a 1986 proclamation condemning the infamous UN resolution equating Zionism and racism. And when, as Bush chief of staff, Sununu took heat for flying military jets to dental visits and ski trips, he attributed the criticism to the fact that he "is a second-generation Lebanese-American who is not fully supportive of Israel's demands."

True to form, Smith's attacks have not been subtle, and some have been outlandish. One Smith supporter sent me an overwrought fact sheet entitled, "JOHN E. SUNUNU: A PATTERN OF SUPPORT FOR RADICAL ANTI ISRAEL CAUSES FUNDED BY RADICAL ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISTS." Smith allies have even quietly accused Sununu's pollster, Lebanese-American John Zogby, of inflating his client's poll numbers in order to promote a pro-Arab agenda. (As if all pollsters didn't inflate their candidates' numbers for a much more universal reason: to make it look like they have momentum and, thus, help them win.)

SMITH IS ALSO introducing legislation aimed at highlighting Sununu's soft-on-terrorism record. Whereas Sununu has championed the repeal of secret evidence in immigration proceedings against suspected terrorists, Smith is now pushing something called the Alien Terrorist Removal Court, which will grease the deportation process. And one of Smith's advisers, Bill Greiner, says that Smith will soon introduce a resolution chastising Lebanon for failing to freeze terrorist assets—a direct shot at the Sununu family homeland. (The Sununus are ethnic Palestinian, but hail from Lebanon.)

And Smith isn't only using the terrorism issue to rack up votes; he hopes it will reap campaign donations as well. Jewish Republican fund-raisers are planning events in Chicago, Miami, and New York. (Cosmetics scion Ron Lauder will host one.) "People are going to really got to bat for Bob," says one New York donor. According to the donor, he and his fellow Republican Jewish activists plan on warning the party that they won't cut checks for the National Republican Senatorial Committee account unless the party intervenes more aggressively on Smith's behalf.

Sununu has moved to inoculate himself—after the Sep-

BARRY BLITT

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tember 11 attacks, he quickly returned $750 in donations from unabashed Hamas enthusiast Abdurahman Alamoudi—and he insists that efforts to go after him on ethnic grounds will backfire. On October 22 Zogby gave an interview to the pro-Sununu Manchester *Union Leader* warning that anti-Arab smears would only create sympathy for Sununu. And if that message was too subtle, one of the paper's columnists, Bernadette Connolly, reinforced it a week later: "[Sununu] is not the type to get snookered by those who would take advantage of his ethnicity."

But Smith's new tack seems to be working, with Sununu's lead turning into a six-point deficit. "Bob Smith is finally starting to poll like a strong incumbent," his pollster John McLaughlin proudly boasts. But there's an irony to Smith's strategy. In 1996, when he first ran for reelection, Smith loudly condemned his Democratic opponent, Dick Swett, for relying on donations from places like New York and California. "It is not Mr. Swett who is raising money here," Smith told one local Rotary Club. "It is Tom Lantos"—the California congressman and Holocaust survivor who is also Swett's father-in-law. "If you see people running ads against me," Smith continued, "it is from people out of state." And lest anyone miss the Buchananesque subtext, the senator's erstwhile allies at the *Union Leader* were happy to explicitly connect "Big Daddy Lantos" to pro-Israel money, describing Lantos as "one of the strongest backers of Israel—if not the strongest—in Congress." The innuendo behind Smith's 1996 attack was ugly and unfair. Now, Sununu could well throw the "out of state" donations charge back in his face: Bob Smith, who's your big daddy now? ■

Why won't the Bushies give the Northern Alliance its due?

Unstated Objective

By LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

A WONDERFUL THING happened this week in Afghanistan. So why does everyone in the Bush administration—everyone, that is, except officials at the Pentagon—sound so glum? Because with the fall of Kabul, the United States achieved an impressive military victory and suffered an impressive diplomatic defeat. Having urged soldiers of the Northern Alliance to fight the ground war it would not, the United States then stipulated that they not enter the capital. Unsurprisingly, they did.

Foggy Bottom's special coordinator for Afghanistan, Richard Haass, privately warned Northern Alliance representatives two weeks ago to halt short of the city. Last Sunday, Colin Powell repeated the admonition in public, saying, "it would be better if they were to 'invest' the city." And, at Powell's urging, President Bush announced that the Northern Alliance should advance "but not into the city of Kabul itself." It was left to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to remind the public why the United States supports the Northern Alliance in the first place. "[T]he goal is, as soon as humanly possible in the right way, to get the Al Qaeda and the Taliban the dickens out of Kabul," Rumsfeld insisted on CBS, even as Powell was urging restraint on NBC. "[The Alliance is] going to attack and take Kabul when they feel like it ... and when they think that they're capable of defeating the Taliban and getting them out of there." Which is exactly what they did.

The contradictory messages were but the latest example of an exceedingly strange feature of the war in Afghanistan: Publicly at least, the United States treats its proxy scarcely better than its foe. So low was the State Department's opinion of the Northern Alliance that last month it didn't want the bombing to begin at all, arguing that the United States should instead wait for the contours of a future Afghan government to emerge. Then Foggy Bottom insisted that the U.S. air campaign exempt Taliban forces arrayed against the Northern Alliance, so the rebels couldn't advance on Kabul. Finally, the Pentagon took over the war—with swift and astonishing results. But as the anti-Taliban offensive draws to a close, and war management slowly reverts to the diplomats, the pressure for calibration and political refinements has returned. As has America's shabby treatment of the soldiers who have been fighting and dying to rid Afghanistan of the Taliban.

Prior to the seizure of Kabul, Pentagon and Northern Alliance officials claim the Defense Department conveyed to the anti-Taliban rebels, both in Washington and on the ground in northern Afghanistan, precisely the message Rumsfeld repeated in public: Fight. Indeed, U.S. Special Forces even accompanied the Northern Alliance into the city. The episode illustrates an important truth about this war: Relations between the United States and its proxy have thus far been conducted nearly exclusively by the Pentagon. The State Department, by contrast, has had barely any contact with the Northern Alliance—a fact that accounts in large part for the muddled message Alliance officials claim to have received from the United States. And, with the fall of the capital, the message became even more confused than before. As the locus of the war moved south this week, administration officials debated two options: Either they could rely on local Pashtun uprisings against the Taliban, or they could encourage the overwhelmingly non-Pashtun Northern Alliance to

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continue its march. Fortunately, the anti-Taliban Pashtun seem to have taken Washington's cue. But, in the event they did not, Pentagon officials said they would have had no qualms about relying on the Northern Alliance instead. The State Department, however, had plenty.

"What you're seeing now is the same [State Department] hand-wringing that held up the bombing [of northern Taliban positions]," complained one senior administration official on the day Kabul fell. "The arguments never change." What were those arguments? First, State Department officials argue that the last time the Northern Alliance had a say in governing the country—prior to the Taliban's seizure of the capital in 1996—it made a hash of things, most notably Kabul, which it all but leveled. The second argument holds that were the minority-dominated Northern Alliance to march south of Kabul, the Pashtuns would recoil into the arms of the Taliban. And the third and final argument is that if Afghanistan falls into the hands of the Alliance, it could destabilize Pakistan.

None of these arguments entirely holds up—perhaps because all three originate from Pakistan, which loathes the Northern Alliance. Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's insistence that "[i]f the Northern Alliance enters Kabul, we'll see the same kind of atrocities against the people there"—a claim U.S. officials have been regurgitating daily—is largely contrived. To begin with, the destruction of Kabul in the mid-1990s was to a great extent the work of Pakistan's own client, the Pashtun leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who killed thousands of residents and shelled the city into dust after breaking with the Northern Alliance's Ahmed Shah Massoud. And since the capture of Kabul this week, we have seen little evidence of the widespread atrocities predicted by Pakistan. To be sure, there have been isolated cases of the Alliance meting out rough and violent justice to Arab and Pakistani cadres. But, for the moment at least, Kabul is a city celebrating its liberation with music, kite-flying, and discarded burqas.

THE COROLLARY TO this argument—that rapid Northern Alliance gains would prompt widescale ethnic conflict—boasts a curious history as well. For years Pakistani leaders have promoted real and imagined Pashtun grievances, seeking to wield Pashtun nationalism as a club against the Northern Alliance while at the same time deflecting it away from their own territory. But Powell's concern that the Northern Alliance not advance too far because Afghanistan's factions "are of different tribal loyalties"—echoing as it does his contention that the war in Bosnia had "deep ethnic and religious roots that go back a thousand years"—is misplaced. Afghanistan's divisions largely derive from political differences and, to a lesser extent, religious ones. As Afghanistan expert Barnett Rubin has observed, inter-Afghan conflict "is almost entirely about power and security. While the groups are ethnically distinct, none of them has an ethnic ideology, and inter-ethnic hostility remains quite low in Afghanistan." Indeed, the ethnic structure of Afghanistan's 20-year-long war has shifted as routinely as its battle lines. And, as the rejoicing in the streets of largely Pashtun Kabul suggests, it's already shifting once more.

The most serious argument for restraining the Northern Alliance has always been that a Northern Alliance-dominated government could destabilize Pakistan. For years the State Department has deferred to Pakistan's wishes concerning Afghanistan—including its early sponsorship of the Taliban. True to form, Foggy Bottom officials argued that, were Kabul or Kandahar to fall to the Northern Alliance, enraged Islamist extremists in the Pakistani officer corps might try to overthrow President Musharraf. But other administration officials find the argument unpersuasive. "[Musharraf] has that country wired," says one. "If he feels so threatened, what's he doing in New York?" According to officials managing the U.S.-Pakistani relationship, Musharraf wields an iron grip on the army and shows no sign of being besieged by his country's comparatively weak religious parties. "[Musharraf] is worried about India, not about himself, and certainly not about our interests," says a senior Bush adviser. Indeed, the argument about Pakistani stability, like the others the State Department has been peddling (including the desirability of "moderate Taliban" representatives in any new government), originates with the Pakistanis themselves.

IF THE STATE DEPARTMENT exaggerated the danger of working closely with the Northern Alliance, it minimized the danger of doing the reverse. Foggy Bottom's arguments against the Alliance always presupposed the existence of an alternative force that could govern Afghanistan. But so far there isn't one. Despite having had two months to do so, the State Department has failed to assemble an Afghan governing coalition or to persuade UN Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi to organize a peacekeeping force. (In a sign of the administration's impatience, earlier this month much of Haass's Afghanistan portfolio was handed to a new envoy, diplomatic troubleshooter James Dobbins.) Nor have the CIA's efforts, which culminated in the disastrous capture and execution of opposition leader Abdul Haq, proved any more impressive in this regard. Hence, the Northern Alliance claim that its forces are policing Kabul in the absence of any alternative has an indisputable basis in fact—a fact, moreover, for which the United States bears no small measure of culpability.

But even more important than the absence of a viable governing alternative to the Northern Alliance has been the absence of a viable fighting alternative. Indeed, to have restrained the Northern Alliance at the gates of Kabul would have served no purpose other than to embolden the Taliban south of the city. Fortunately, the Pentagon continued to prod the Alliance forward. The State Department may not be working closely with Alliance forces, but the U.S. military's coordination with them improves daily. And, explicitly recalling Powell's disastrous Gulf war advice that a sizable chunk of Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard be allowed to retreat from Kuwait unscathed, Pentagon officials claim that had Pashtuns not acted in the South, they would have backed a Northern Alliance advance there as well. Far from being preoccupied with the tumult that such a move may have provoked, Defense Department officials argued that the more chaos in southern Afghanistan the better, as pressure from the Northern Alliance would have flushed Al Qaeda and Tal-

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iban operatives out into the open. As it happens, anti-Taliban Pashtuns may already be doing that themselves.

So the ground campaign continues as it began. From the first days of this war, Foggy Bottom has denigrated the Northern Alliance in its pursuit of a secondary political aim—the stability of postwar Afghanistan—at the expense of the war's essential aim, the destruction of Al Qaeda and the Taliban. But whoever could best achieve the latter aim always deserved our support. After all, who's doing whom the bigger favor here? The Northern Alliance has bled for us and toppled the Taliban. In return, President Bush says that the Northern Alliance will receive no preferential treatment from the United States, and a State Department official claims it will be entitled only to a "very subordinate role" in a postwar government. The administration would do well to remember that it's only because of the Northern Alliance's "very subordinate role" in the war that Afghanistan has a postwar government at all. ■

Kabul Dispatch

Home

By ELIZABETH RUBIN

"Hurry hurry hurry. We can destroy the enemy. Advance."
"Hit hit hit the Taliban."
"Hit him hit him hit him. Fire, fire."
"We're arriving in Khalakhan."
"Take care about the troops."
"The Taliban are surrendering."
"Bring them to me."
"One hundred of them are coming to you."
"El Ham captured a pickup with their weapons."

THESE WERE THE voices on the radio of the Northern Alliance commanders we have been visiting for weeks. Several other journalists and I were standing with some Afghan soldiers on the roof of a command post—a mud house with a tank's turret and gun jutting out of the roof—just outside a village called Qala-I-Zai, on the road to Kabul. An American B-52 looped around overhead. The ground trembled and giant charcoal cyclones of smoke curtained the sky above the Taliban front line, maybe a kilometer to the east. "It's like an atomic bomb," someone said. A pickup sped by carrying a body covered in a gray, woolen blanket, and the Afghan soldiers clicked their tongues and shook their heads. It was one of their own. Thin sand squalls rose across the desert plain. The soldiers fired giant rockets from an old Soviet multiple-rocket launcher, sending birds into flight over our heads. Nineteen- and twenty-year-old soldiers waiting for orders to advance broke into hysterical laughter every time another Taliban mortar crashed around us and someone rose from the ground with dust covering their lips and eyelashes. Later, a CNN cameraman showed up. He was filming every journalist he encountered, just in case, he said, "because you know three were killed yesterday."

After weeks and weeks of waiting, of commanders complaining about ammunition shortages and about the inexplicable delays of their leaders, early Monday morning the Northern Alliance soldiers lined up on the old and new roads to Kabul in front of their tanks. It was a moment of solemnity before finally setting off to take back their capital. A soldier sang melancholy Koranic verse. The men prayed to Allah for victory, and to destroy the foreign terrorists in their country, to capture back their villages and towns, and to stay alive.

There was El Ham, with the immaculately clean black boots, whose former friend, Sharif, was a Taliban commander now. Normally El Ham and he had cordial, even friendly, chats over the walkie-talkie at the end of a fighting day. A few days earlier he'd called up Sharif on the walkie-talkie. Sharif had lost several soldiers to an American bomb, and he was in a bad mood. When he heard an American woman was in the vicinity, he denounced El Ham as an infidel and a servant of the Americans. A 21-year-old in El Ham's unit was sitting on the floor petting a yellow and gray desert bird he'd found. He hated Sharif and the shame the Taliban brought to the name of Islam. "Islam says women should be educated. And in fact," he said, "we're fighting this war because of the rights of women."

There was Mohammad Reza, a 27-year-old tank driver and engineer who had wanted a different, normal life. He was married just two months ago. The day before, leaning against his tank in his black sneakers, and smiling a shy, James Dean kind of smile, he had asked me why the Americans had been so fooled by the Taliban, why they supported the Taliban in the early days. And then he answered his own question, discussing the U.S. government's backing for UNOCAL, a U.S. energy company, and its plan to build a pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and into Pakistan in the 1990s. Mohammad Reza was from Kabul, and he hadn't seen his parents or sisters since 1996, when the Taliban took the capital and he fled with Ahmed Shah Massoud's forces into the Panjshir Valley. After all these years of waiting to return, he couldn't imagine obeying the Americans, who said that the Northern Alliance should advance only as far as the gates of the city.

ELIZABETH RUBIN is covering the war in Afghanistan for THE NEW REPUBLIC.

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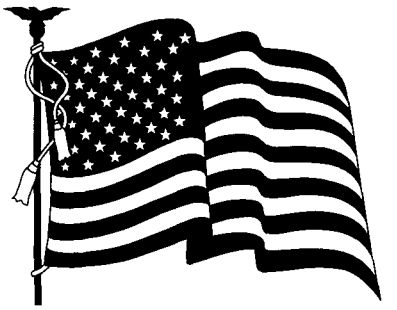
Enemy

NOW WE'RE IN A REAL WAR...



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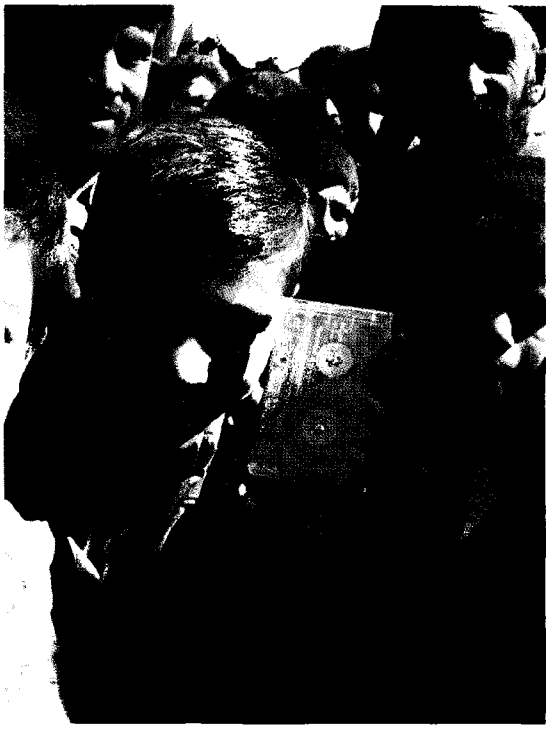
There was the comedian tank commander, Ahmad Shah, one of the few Afghans I've met with a pet dog, whom he calls Maxi. He'd saved me and a few other journalists one day—we had been taking cover in a house—when he rolled up in his tank, popped out of the driver's hole covered in dust, and offered us a ride out of a crossfire along the same old road from Qala-I-Zai to Kabul.



There was Mohammad Allah, a blue-eyed 26-year-old who'd been a commander of a hundred soldiers since the age of 16, when he replaced his brother who was killed in the civil war. His frontline position had been the bombed-out cinema built by the Russians at the Bagram airport north of Kabul, where they had some 4,000 soldiers stationed in the 1980s, and where we had visited him not long before. He told me he adored Indian film stars. He'd lost ten relatives in the last three months, some of them in the Taliban assault just after the World Trade Center attack. "Here you can see their blood," he'd said during our visit, rubbing his hand down the burgundy stains on the pink cinema wall. He has three small children, but his wife died two years ago—from "illness," he said—and he told me when there was peace in Afghanistan, he'd marry again and go walking with his new wife.

I heard someone shouting over the walkie-talkie that it was Mohammad Allah's turn to advance and kill the Taliban. Not long ago he had said to me, "Are we ready for this attack? Fifty-fifty." But as Mohammad Reza, the newly wed tank driver, had said when I asked him about the land mines along the road, "It's an offensive. Some of us will be lost."

As early dusk began falling over the Shamali Plain on Monday, however, it was clear the Taliban positions were rapidly collapsing. One success after another was signaled by the firing of a rocket and a plume of black smoke hovering like a parachute high in the sky, each one further south as the Northern Alliance captured another village. In one former Taliban village in the cradle of a small mountain to the west, the Northern Alliance soldiers set a blazing fire to tell the American pilots still flying not to bomb anymore because they'd taken the position.

That night I drove back north to Gulbahar to see Commander Qais, who I'd heard was advancing on his home village of Karabagh, one of the last before Kabul. He pulled up to his quarters in a pickup. One of his soldiers got out and breathlessly slipped a red backpack off his shoulder. "It's from an Arab I killed," he said, smiling. He pulled out some clothes and a handwritten driver's license for a man named Abdul Hakim. Wind was whipping around the willows over a brook that ran right down the middle of the road. Qais, a small, thin, modest man who looks much older than his 35 years, walked up to me slowly. His face was splattered with shrapnel wounds. His pockets were full of documents taken from Arabs and Pakistanis who'd been lying injured on the road until Qais's boys ran over them with their tanks. "I was a child when we started fighting terrorism and now my beard is gray. But maybe, finally, terrorism will be wiped out from all the world," he said. He was exhausted but he'd made the two-hour trip back north to see his mother and pick up ammunition, water, and food for his soldiers.

Early the next morning, we took the road out to Karabagh through a melancholy, eerie landscape of burnt-out mud and brick houses, standing like washed-over sandcastles on a beach. When the Taliban captured the place a few years ago, they even burnt the vineyards black. We were expecting to find a Northern Alliance front line, but except for a few soldiers we picked up along the way, the road was empty and we drove on, 20 minutes or so, until Khair Khana, just under the mountain pass that leads into Kabul. Some Pakistanis and Arabs were splayed out dead in the middle of the road, along with one huge, red-bearded Talib. He was a commander named Mahmoud, I later found out, who had been gunned down fleeing from Kabul that morning.

Further on we could see the outskirts of the city in the valley below and hundreds of young men moving up from Kabul to greet the Northern Alliance troops. It all happened so fast, and so unexpectedly. Though the Northern Alliance troops were piled on trucks and vans and buses and even donkeys, the push for Kabul was by all accounts meticulously coordinated, crushing the Taliban in the villages north of the city within hours. Hundreds and hundreds of Taliban defected, others ran, and the front lines collapsed around mid-afternoon on Monday. By about ten o'clock that night, the Taliban were fleeing the capital. Inside the city, Hindi music floated from the windows of yellow taxis. One driver told us he used to play his music softly; if he saw a Taliban checkpoint he'd switch to prayer music.

A traffic jam was forming on the pass while the Northern Alliance soldiers waited for the go-ahead from their leaders to enter the city, so we decided to walk. Though I had a large shawl over my head, I was wearing pants and boots and I wasn't wearing a burqa. An entourage quickly formed around us. Men shouted, "Welcome, welcome." Another shouted, "Oh, it's been so long that I've seen such a girl dressed like you. Five years. I love you." The women wafting along the roadside in their blue burqas said that yes, in a few days, if things were secure, they'd throw them off. "We're free. We're free. They were so horrible, they stoned us, they beat us if we wore these improperly," one woman said quietly through the screen covering her face.

I ran into a few soldiers I'd met in Jabal Saraj, and they led

GETTY IMAGES

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us to a jeep and a man named Amin Doulla, whose missing teeth gave his face the look of an ancient nomad, though he was only 40 years old. "If they'd give him to me I'd eat him," he said, tears filling his eyes as he shook his fists at a young Pakistani man sitting in a jeep between two Northern Alliance soldiers. Amin Doulla shouted at him, but the boy from the Punjab sat stiffly, unfazed. "Three years ago, he fired a mortar into my house," Amin said, pulling his arms back to imitate the firing of artillery. "I hid in the grape fields and watched him burn my house with petrol. All my children were killed. Eight children," he shouted. "I want to eat him. I want to eat him." It was incredible that the two should have met there, on the Khair Khana pass. Soldiers had seen the Pakistani trying to flee up the road. And when they arrested him, Amin Doulla happened to be passing by. Still shaking, Amin Doulla pointed at his own mouth. "He found me, arrested me, and I was in jail for two years and lost all my teeth." Soon, other men gathered round the jeep chanting, "Hit him, hit him, kill this fuck-off."

THE CROWD AROUND us was getting out of control—the men wanted to look at and talk to the foreigners, especially the American woman—so we got into a taxi going into Kabul. The driver somewhat apologetically said, "You see how the Taliban have made our people so wild." He turned up the music and pointed to the children climbing through the gates of the Taliban barracks, just outside the city, that had been destroyed by American bombs.

For weeks we'd heard about the Pakistanis and Arabs gathering on the front lines, and the claims of the Northern Alliance that Afghanistan is under foreign occupation. Slowly, the truth of those claims came to light. Inside the city, under the pine trees and in the canals of a park near the shutdown cinema, lay the crumpled, stiff remains of several Arabs and Pakistanis who'd put up a two-hour gunfight that morning. Kids had stuffed cigarettes in the mouth of one Arab, wrapped tape from a cassette around his neck, and put a heavy stick in his hand—all symbols of the Taliban regime's repressive practices. Gathered round a sizzled pickup that had apparently been bombed by American planes, clusters of people were sifting through the debris, turning up fingers and hair of Taliban. Children on trucks, on the sidewalks, perched on the walls of the roundabouts chanted unabashedly, "Fuck off Taliban," "Fuck the Taliban mothers," "Death to the Taliban and death to Pakistan."

Outside the home of Mahmoud, the dead, red-bearded commander we'd seen on the roadside, we could hear the women wailing. Several men ushered me inside to take pictures on behalf of the male photographer I was traveling with. Back outside, one of the men said, "First he was a Northern Alliance commander, then he joined the Taliban. God has a schedule for human beings and so he took him this morning." Another said, "They made us like prisoners in our homes and now we are free."

By midday the Northern Alliance commanders were in the city. Gul Haider, a well-known, wooden-legged commander who has been fighting since the days of the Russians, had occupied an Arab and Pakistani military compound. A security guard with the Northern Alliance showed us an address book he'd found with numbers abroad to contact Osama bin Laden. At the Ministry for the Suppression of Vice and the Promotion of Virtue, books and papers written in Arabic littered the floors and desks and cabinets, along with piles of the infamous leather whips made in Pakistan and used by the religious police. One rolled-up edict read: "Three cooks didn't pray in the evening and were given seven hundred whacks with the cable. In the morning four men left the house without saying prayers and were given seven hundred whacks with the cable."

A poster-sized statement, drafted by the mullahs here, attempted to lay out all the Koranic justifications for closing down the girls' schools—namely, because they need to be covered in chadors and separated from men. A bundle of Bibles written in Hebrew along with letters to Israel were bound up in a green bag, most likely confiscated from Jewish Afghans. The man guarding the old ministry shuddered when he saw a pile of turbans on a windowsill. He'd been thrown in prison by the religious police numerous times—because his beard was too short, because he was Tajik, because he was a man from the Panjshir Valley selling rugs.

Perhaps the greatest signs of freedom in Kabul today were the clumps of hair gathering on the barbershop floors, and the children sailing their multicolored kites over every city neighborhood—a pastime forbidden here for the last five years. The barbers, many of whom were arrested eight months ago for giving "*Titanic*-style" haircuts—combed straight, with a part down the center, and too Western—were celebrating the Taliban defeat by cutting their customers' beards for free. I met a woman doctor, a cousin of Ahmed Shah Massoud, who held the rank of general in the military for nearly 20 years but was confined to practicing medicine on Taliban wives just once a month at the military hospital. "Tomorrow," she told me, "they must announce on the radio that we can take off these chadris. And then I'll put back on my general's uniform and walk the streets with my face to the air." ■

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

A Trio and a Pair

ONCE IN A WHILE, yet surprisingly often, a film challenges its filmic being. Two of the innate powers of film are its control of space and its control of time. It can go anywhere in a blink, it can condense years or stretch seconds. We are so coddled by these cinematic powers that we usually snuggle in them without much awareness that they are being used. But then comes a film that slams on the brakes, spatial and temporal—to dwell in one place in real time—and we pay attention.

The recurrent fault in such films is an assumption of superiority just because of their spareness. John Foster Dulles had an island home with no electricity, where he and his wife lived and worked by lamplight and pumped water by hand. What sighs of admiration they drew for their old-fashioned simplicity. But they reminded me of Kafka's Hunger Artist, who said: "I always wanted you to admire my fasting." So with the one-set, real-time film: it has to get us past its pride in its parsimony by justifying it.

The last such film that I saw didn't make it. *The Big Kahuna*, with Kevin Spacey and Danny DeVito, good as they always are, seemed trapped in its one-set trick. But now comes **Tape** (Lions Gate), directed by Richard Linklater, which quickly justifies its compression—one room and three actors—and goes further. Its spareness actually increases our pleasure. Any other shape would hurt the film: this shape and this concentration on three people put the story under a jeweler's glass.

Linklater arrived ten years ago with *Slacker*, a seemingly casual film about seemingly casual people, and forged onward. About a month ago he presented *Waking Life*, an animated film made by shooting with a camera, then digitally transferring the images to computers, where animators could work on them. The result, alas, was neither animation nor photography, but the liquefaction of both. The material liquefied the picture further. It consisted of a young man's inquiries into the difference, if any, between sleep and waking, and it never got much past the aerated precepts of those who become articulate before they become mature. *Tape*, confirming Linklater's remarkable range, is much closer to real intricacies and concealments.

The place is Michigan—a motel room in Lansing. Stephen Belber's screenplay, adapted from a play of his, concerns three graduates of a Lansing high school seen ten years later. Vince lives in Oakland, where he is a firefighter and (mostly) a drug dealer. He is back in Lansing to see Johnny, now a film-maker, who is there because a film of his is being shown in a local festival. As we learn, what truly brought Vince back is neither his friendship with Johnny nor his interest in Johnny's film, but their long-past relationships with a girl named Amy who was in their high school class.

Amy does not appear until the last third of the film. Before that, we go through strophes of masculine reunion and pounding and talk about what they have been up to in the intervening years, but all of this chat seems merely to festoon a strand of barbed wire that runs through. Vince had been in love with Amy ten years ago, and on the big night of their graduation party she went off with Johnny, got a little drunk with him, and Something Happened. After all this has been dug up in this motel conversation, Vince reveals that he has taped the conversation, which stuns and infuriates Johnny. Vince, by now pretty high, floats over the rebuff, elated because he has winkled out a confession from Johnny, and can tease with it as a threat.

Vince had left a message for Amy, who is now an assistant district attorney in Lansing. She responds and comes to the motel room to see her two former friends. She is no longer aggrieved by what happened ten years ago, but she certainly has not forgotten it. The discomfort in the air is both intensified and clarified by this competent woman, and the tape intensifies it further. For the first ten minutes or so of this eighty-eight-minute film, we think that this whole story may be one of those school escapades that really matter only to the people who remember them. But the hurts and the hates, the fears and the tendernesses, that have underlain the matter for ten years begin to work on us, enlarge the scale, and are brought to fullness by Amy's arrival.

Belber's writing, in up-to-the-second stenographic style, sizzles sufficiently, but the story gets its weight, involves us, through the performances. Ethan Hawke, a victim of last year's *Hamlet* film, is sleazy and sharp, vindictive and sly, bursting with energy and glowering with guile. Robert Sean Leonard, whom I last saw on Broadway as the young A. E. Housman in Stoppard's *The Invention of Love*, gives Johnny a sense of the growth that Vince has not achieved and opens small windows on his character's conscience. As Amy, Uma Thurman, not previously an admiration of mine, is subtly and attractively straightforward, strong.

Linklater's camera strains a bit for visual variety within the confines of the room—shots between legs, whip-pans from one face to another—but otherwise *Tape* overcomes its cleverness with substance.

A young French actress named Audrey Tautou makes a her debut doubly, in a pair of films simultaneously released. In one of them she is prominent, in the other she is practically the whole show. Tautou is quiet, dark-haired, and wide-eyed, and wends her way through both films with winning reticence and with just enough grit to make her non-aggression appealing.

What is remarkable about these Tautou films is that, though they were made by different writers and directors, they really are a pair. They deal, in various comic colors, with the same basic idea: actions, however small, have consequences. The title of one is translated as **Happenstance** (Lot 47 Films), but in France was called *The Beating of the Butterfly's Wing*. An old saw says that the beating of that wing over the Atlantic eventually causes a storm over the Pacific, and the screenplay, written by the director Laurent Firode, stitches together a series of intersecting events that are started by an action that was not intended to start them. At the close Tautou and a young man whom she has only glimpsed in a subway car at the very beginning are sitting back to back on park benches. They turn to face each other, see that each is wearing the same sort of facial bandage as the result of an accident, and accept that Gallic fate has prevailed.

Amélie (Miramax Zoe) is built on the same pattern of happy and wistful (though always comic) accidents. The screenplay, written by Guillaume Laurant and the director, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, has

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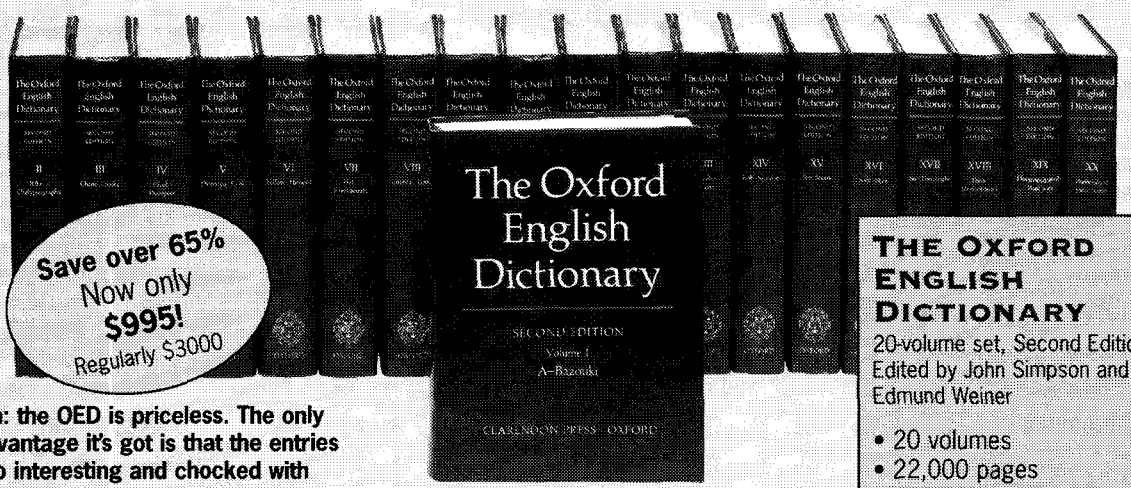

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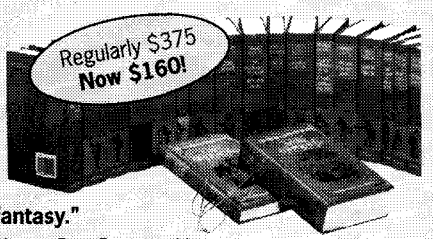

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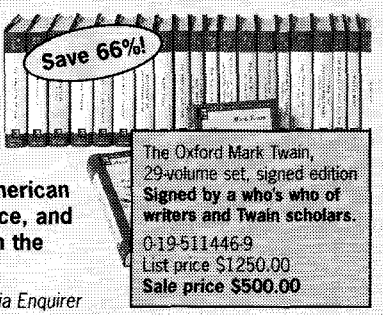

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more of those accidents than *Happenstance*—it's a half-hour longer—and gives Tautou a pleasant leading man in Mathieu Kassovitz. A few touches are wry. (On a train platform a panhandler is seated on the ground leaning against a pillar. A passing woman wants to drop a coin in his cap. He says, "No, thank you, madame, I don't work on Sundays.")

The fundamental chuckle in these films is that their kind continues to be made. Every film-making country has an image of itself that it loves. The French image is of light-hearted happiness: stories of chance that turn out well because French people, especially the minor characters, are good-hearted and are responsive to young love. (*Amélie*, a smash in France, was made last year. It reminded me of an enchanting 1930s picture called *Mademoiselle Mozart* with Danielle Darrieux.) Well, long may they wave—if not too often. ■

The Roar

By GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

Churchill: A Study in Greatness by Geoffrey Best

(Hambledon and London, 370 pp., $29.95)

Churchill: A Biography by Roy Jenkins

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1,002 pp., $40)

I.

THE EMINENT ENGLISH historian Geoffrey Elton once wrote:

> When I meet a historian who cannot think that there have been great men, great men moreover in politics, I feel myself in the presence of a bad historian; and there are times when I incline to judge all historians by their opinion of Winston Churchill—whether they can see that, no matter how much better the details, often damaging, of man and career become known, he still remains, quite simply, a great man.

In the United States, we are re-remembering our great men. After years of being told by learned historians that history is not made by great men—that it is made by forces (economic, social, demographic, geographic) beyond the control of individuals, that the very words "great men" are an aspersion on the ordinary people, the "anonymous masses," whose names do not figure in the pages of history, to say nothing of the women, great and not great, who are thereby expunged from history (the very idea of greatness is maligned as a masculine, therefore sexist, concept)—we are now being deluged with best-selling books on our great men, most notably the Founding Fathers and Abraham Lincoln. These are not, as they might once have been, muckraking books, exposing the clay feet (or more often, the libidinous impulses) that make these men seem less great. Nor are they hagiographical works designed to make them not so much great men as supermen. They are good, solid, scholarly (and readable) volumes that establish their subjects' title to greatness not so much by virtue of their personal qualities, although those are no small part of it, as by their role in history, in the founding and the shaping of the nation.

Now, in the aftermath of one of the most devastating terrorist attacks in modern history, we are re-remembering another great man who was not one of our own (although he liked to remind us that his mother was American). As we embark on our war against terrorism, we are admonished to recall the courage, the determination, and the heroism of Winston Churchill in his (and our) war against Nazism. There is hardly a commentator on the disasters in New York and Washington who has not invoked his name, and newspapers in both cities have devoted entire articles to him, quoting his more memorable pronouncements and recalling his bravery and bravado during the war. An electronic count of references to him in print during the first week after the attacks comes to more than one thousand, and this does not include television, radio, and other occasions.

It was startling to hear the president, not known for his eloquence, being commended for his Churchillian addresses to the nation. A passage in Bush's speech to the joint session of Congress on September 20, "We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail" (somewhat differently worded in a speech two weeks later as "We will not waver; we will not tire; we will not falter; and we will not fail"), was, surely not coincidentally, an echo of Churchill's speech of February 9, 1941, "We shall not fail or falter; we shall not weaken or tire." It is perhaps not surprising to hear the secretary of defense or the deputy secretary of defense, or even the secretary of health and human services, quoting Churchill. But it is bizarre to hear his words rendered in the accent and the intonation of the mayor of New York—"Churchill in a ball cap," Churchill's grandson (another Winston) dubbed him. Giuliani not only quoted Churchill; he was repeatedly likened to him as he walked amid the rubble of the World Trade Center honoring those who lost their lives there and comforting their survivors. "Who Knew Rudy Was Churchill?" read the headline in one newspaper. And so it went, through one crisis after another. When anthrax caused the closing of the House of Representatives for a few days, a historian might be reminded of Churchill's reaction to the bombing of the House of Commons: "This Chamber must be rebuilt—just as it was! Meanwhile, we shall not miss a single day's debate through this."

THE BRITISH, *pace* Elton, have not always been so respectful of Churchill. Six years ago, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the victory over Germany, the British Education Department prepared a video to be distributed to all primary schools. The thirty-four-minute video contained a single fourteen-second reference to Churchill, a remark uttered by a child: "People thought he helped the war end in Britain." In the twenty-four-minute video for secondary schools, he was mentioned exactly once: "Though defeated, Mr. Churchill is proclaimed a great war leader"; and this was followed by the comment that his defeat allowed the Labour Party "to use profits from state-owned industries to finance better public services, such as health care." A survey a few weeks later showed that one in three British schoolchildren had no idea who Churchill was; guesses ranged from an American president to a songwriter.

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB is the author, most recently, of *One Nation, Two Cultures* (Vintage).

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Fortunately, the Education Department's cavalier treatment of Churchill does not extend to biographers who continue to write about him, sometimes disparagingly (in "revisionist" accounts that criticize him for not making peace with Hitler earlier), but more often respectfully. Nor is it reflected in the reading public, which continues to make best-sellers of many of these books (especially the appreciative ones). The bibliography of works by and about Churchill contains some three thousand entries, including the authorized (definitive, one would normally say, except that in the case of Churchill nothing is definitive) eight-volume biography by Randolph S. Churchill and Martin Gilbert, and its thirteen companion volumes of documents, with many more to come. Among the more notable biographies are the first two volumes of William Manchester's projected trilogy (the final volume, we have now been told, will not be completed) and, in the last decade alone, books of substantial length by Martin Gilbert (more than one thousand pages), Clive Ponting, John Charmley, Henry Pelling, and Norman Rose, plus half a dozen shorter works, books on particular aspects of Churchill's life, and volumes of essays. And then there are all the books by Churchill himself, most of which are in print, in paperback, and often available on audio cassette as well. The late John Plumb, who, as a best-selling historian, was sensitive to such matters, once said that Churchill "sold more books on history than any historian in this century and perhaps any century."

We now have two new biographies, by Geoffrey Best and Roy Jenkins, that make for a nice counterpoint. Best's book, of modest length, is the work of a professional historian; Jenkins's book, almost three times longer, is written by a professional politician who also happens to be a prolific biographer. Both authors are of an age to remember Churchill during the war. As a schoolboy, Best listened to Churchill's speeches as "quasi-religious events," and was so impressed by them that he requested a volume of them as a school prize. Jenkins was introduced to Churchill by his father, a Labour MP, in the temporary quarters of the Commons after the old chamber was destroyed by bombs; seven years later he himself was to be a member of the House.

Both biographers explain why they chose to write about Churchill. Best approaches him (as his subtitle, "A Study in Greatness," suggests) in the spirit of Elton. A professor of history at St. Antony's College, Oxford, and the author of works on Victorian Britain and, more recently, on modern warfare, he was moved to write about the peacetime and wartime career of "the greatest Englishman of the twentieth century," "the saviour of his country." Jenkins comes to his subject by a different route and in a different spirit (as his austere subtitle, "A Biography," indicates). Like Churchill, Jenkins has combined two full-time careers, as a longtime member of Parliament (serving as home secretary and chancellor of the exchequer in Labour governments before founding and briefly leading the Social Democratic Party, and now serving in the House of Lords) and as the author of eighteen books, most on British parliamentary figures. Having completed a prize-winning biography of Gladstone, he was casting around for his next project. It had to be a "big subject," he knew; anything less would be like ambling up Snowdon after an expedition to the Himalayas. (The mountain metaphor appeals to him. In the preface to his Gladstone biography, he compared that task to climbing the Matterhorn.) There was only one subject, an adviser told him, who would not be anti-climactic: Churchill. And so we now have this huge biography of a huge subject, a man who, Jenkins has now decided, is "marginally ahead of Gladstone." (In the biography of Gladstone, it was he who was "the most remarkable specimen of humanity" who ever served as prime minister.)

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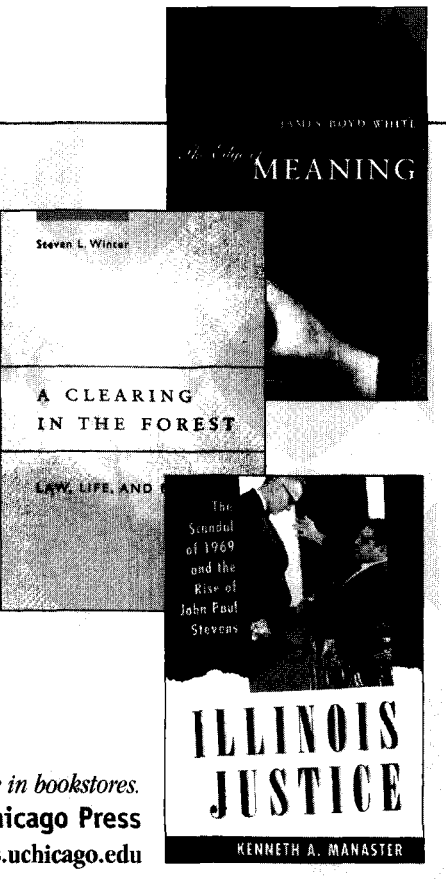
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After all that has been written by and about Churchill, it is not surprising, as both authors readily admit, that neither book contains very much new about him. But even the most familiar retelling of this remarkable life has its own justification. It is always exhilarating to climb Everest yet again, if only vicariously. It is also interesting to see how different biographers impose themselves upon their subjects.

Jenkins's Churchill is haunted by Gladstone's ghost. Both men, we are reminded, changed parties (Gladstone more elegantly by quoting a passage from Virgil in Latin); Churchill fought even more constituency contests that Gladstone; a political crisis in 1916 over an obscure question of property rights in Nigeria evokes the memory of the Home Rule controversy in 1886, as does the debate in the House of Commons after the failure of the Norway campaign in May 1940; Churchill's "brooding" about the dangers of the H-bomb was reminiscent of Gladstone's vexation over increased naval expenditures. And there are repeated comparisons of their ages at various stages of their careers; their health, marriages, and funerals; and, finally, their relative merit and rank.

But all of this has more to do with Jenkins's own immersion in Gladstone than with Churchill himself. For it is not the Liberal Gladstone who evokes the spirit of Churchill, but the Tory Disraeli (whom Jenkins mentions only in passing). Temperamentally and politically, Churchill was cast in the Disraelian mold—romantic, flamboyant, and eccentric; paternalistic, nationalistic, and imperialistic. If Gladstone was a "Little Englander," Churchill, like Disraeli, surely deserves to be called a "Great Englander." Unlike Gladstone, who was something of a Manchester liberal, Churchill, like Disraeli (and like his own father), was a Tory democrat. (It was Randolph Churchill who founded the Primrose League, named in honor of Disraeli, the primrose being his favorite flower. One of Winston's first political acts as a schoolboy was to join the Primrose League.)

Gladstone, many suspected, saw himself as the emissary of God on earth; Churchill—again like Disraeli—clearly preferred to think of himself as the emissary of the English nation. Gladstone was notoriously humorless, priggish, moralistic; Churchill was witty, irreverent, ironic. (There are entire books on Churchill's "wit and wisdom," and scores of other witticisms that circulate privately because they are too ribald for publication.) Disraeli would have been amused, and Gladstone appalled, by Churchill's famous quip, "I am ready to meet my Maker. Whether my Maker is ready to meet me is another question." Churchill himself, asked to elaborate on his religious belief, quoted Disraeli: "Sensible men are all of the same religion." Pressed further, he cited Disraeli again: "Sensible men never tell."

COURTESY FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX

Churchill with his wife, Gertrude Bell, and Lawrence of Arabia in Cairo, 1921

II.

IT IS OFTEN said that had Churchill died in 1939, at the ripe age of sixty-five (outliving his father by almost twenty years), he would be remembered, if at all, not as a hero but as yet another politician, and (like his father) as a failed politician to boot. If that were so, it would do a grave injustice to a man who, at every stage of his existence, was larger than life. He lived his life with a vigor and a passion exhibited by few men. And he wrote about it even as he lived it—not narcissistically, like so many memoirists of our own time, but historically, so to speak, fully conscious that in writing about himself he was writing about his country and his times.

By 1939, Churchill had written three books about his military experiences in India and Africa in the late 1890s, a memoir of his early life, a two-volume biography of his father, a four-volume life-and-times of his ancestor the first Duke of Marlborough, a five-volume history of World War I and its aftermath, a four-volume history of the English-speaking peoples (published very much later), several other books about his experiences and contemporaries, and one (happily only one) novel, *Savrola*—all of this in addition to the steady stream of newspaper articles from which he derived a substantial part of his income, the innumerable speeches delivered in and out of Parliament (three volumes of which were published before 1939), and the voluminous correspondence, with his wife most notably but with others as well. During all this time, he was an active (too active, many complained) member of Parliament, often in high position in the cabinet. This is not a man who can be easily forgotten.

In retrospect, of course, we can recognize in the pre-heroic, pre–World War II Churchill the distinctive features of the character that we now know. His life of the Duke of Marlborough is not simply a testament of ancestral piety or pride (it does not entirely ignore the Duke's less reputable aspects, his self-aggrandizement and self-enrichment, although it dwells upon them far less than most biographers). It is instead an account of the military and diplomatic achievements that the young Churchill had good reason to admire, and even then hoped to emulate. If he later cherished the Blenheim estate that was his only material heritage from that aristocratic lineage (the family fortune had long since been dissipated), it was at least in part because of what the Battle of Blenheim signified. Marlborough's victory in one of the decisive battles in the War of the Spanish Succession altered the balance of power in Europe, signaling the end of the French dominion and the beginning of the British. "England's Advance to World Power" is the title Churchill later gave to this period in his *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, in which he paid tribute to his ancestor who had "rendered glorious" one of the great reigns in English history.

We can also see something of the later Churchill in his own father. Lord Randolph Churchill once quipped that Gladstone was "an old man in a hurry." It was more true to say that he himself was a young man in a hurry. He was engaged to Jennie Jerome, daughter of an American financier, three days after they met; they were married eight months later (a delay

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occasioned by their fathers' squabbling over the dowry); and Winston was born seven months after that (prematurely, owing to a riding fall by his mother). In that same year, 1874, Randolph, then twenty-five, acquired not only a wife and a son, but also a seat in Parliament (like his father before him). Ten years later, he was chancellor of the exchequer and leader of the House of Commons in Salisbury's government. Ten years after that, at the age of forty-five, he was dead. If Winston Churchill was also very much a young man in a hurry, Jenkins suggests, it may have been because he thought that, like his father, he would have little time to achieve the prominence that he sought.

There was much in the life of the father that presaged the life of the son. Randolph Churchill was the most successful orator (or demagogue, his critics had it) of his time, the most famous (or publicity-seeking) member of his party, the boldest (or most irresponsible) theoretician, a lively (or insolent) conversationalist, and a great (or cruel) wit—traits that have also been attributed to the son. The father was also a failure in politics (having had to resign as chancellor after the defeat of his first budget), as his son was thought to be before 1939.

Yet some of the criticisms of the father may be questionable. Jenkins sees the "Tory democracy" that was the driving force behind the faction (the "Fourth Party") led by Churchill as "opportunism" and "self-promotion." But this may reflect Jenkins's own political bias: as a good Labourite and Social Democrat, he cannot credit any Conservative, still less any Tory, with a concern for democracy or social reform. Nor can the admiring biographer of Gladstone, the partisan of Irish home rule, credit Randolph Churchill's opposition to home rule as anything but unprincipled, intolerant, and irresponsible. In fact, it was a perfectly respectable view at the time; Gladstone himself, after all, was a late convert to home rule.

Randolph Churchill may have been even more of a failure as a father than as a politician. Many years later, toward the end of a long dinner together, Winston remarked to his own son, another Randolph: "We have this evening had a longer period of continuous conversation together than the total which I ever had with my father in the whole course of his life." (He was twenty when his father died.) He might have said the same of his mother. A great beauty and an active socialite, she had little time for her husband (it was rumored that Winston's younger brother had a different father, and there are several plausible candidates for that role), and even less time for her son. "She shone for me like the Evening Star," he later wrote. "I loved her dearly—but at a distance." A constant refrain in his letters from school is the pathetic and almost invariably futile wish that she visit him occasionally, or even that she be at home when he returned on holiday. It was his old nanny to whom he paid tribute, on her death, as "my dearest and most intimate friend during the whole of the twenty years I had lived."

THE BIOGRAPHER OF Churchill is always competing with his subject, who wrote so voluminously and movingly about his own life. It is from his memoir, *My Early Life*, that we get a memorable picture of Churchill's childhood and schooling (boarding schools, of course): the first school brutal even by the standards of the day (the severity of the flogging, he later recalled, would not have been tolerated in any reformatory for delinquent children); the second physically less trying (although the food was even worse) and intellectually less rigorous; and then Harrow, where he did not at all distinguish himself in the classics, which were supposedly the mark of an educated man, but where he acquired other traits that were to serve him well—a love of history, of English literature, and of the English language.

These talents did not quite prepare him for the military academy of Sandhurst, which he entered only after three tries. Yet he graduated from Sandhurst—in

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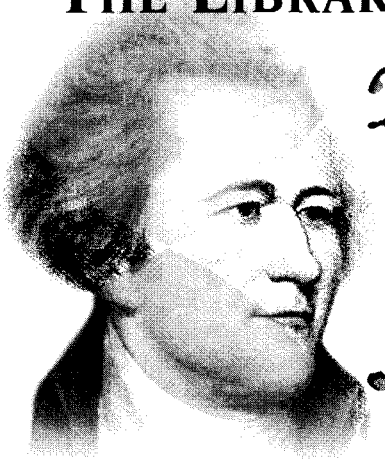

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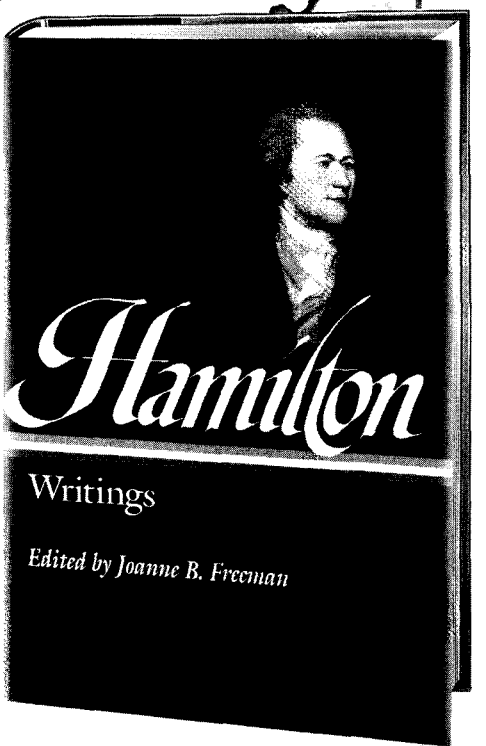

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December 1894, weeks before his father's death—well near the top of his class. Commissioned as a second lieutenant in the cavalry, Churchill embarked on a military career that he was to combine, most improbably, with a career in journalism, and which was to lead, again improbably, to an extraordinary career in politics.

While still at Harrow, he wrote to his aunt: "If I had two lives I would be a soldier and a politician. But as there will be no war in my time I shall have to be a politician." But Churchill soon found a war, or rather a series of wars. During the winter season of leave, while most of the officers were hunting, he volunteered with the Spanish force engaged in suppressing the nationalist rebels in Cuba. This was his first, rather desultory experience of warfare (and, Best observes, the beginning of his lifelong addiction to Cuban cigars). Returning to his regiment in India, he had a more serious taste of war on the North-West Frontier, and, more serious still, as a volunteer in the Sudan, where he participated in what is generally described as the last great cavalry charge in British history.

An active officer in his regiment, he also served as a war correspondent covering the battles in which he fought, and he then wrote books about those engagements. Jenkins suggests that it was fame and money that inspired both his writing and his military adventures. But he does not deny Churchill's bravery and his evident attraction to danger itself, to the glamour of war and the imperial enterprise served by war. Churchill also somehow managed to find time, when not fighting or writing (or drinking or playing polo), to read—not casually, for distraction, but systematically and purposively, as if to compensate for the education he had failed to get in school. He started with the obvious masters, Gibbon and Macaulay, and then went on to Plato, Aristotle, Schopenhauer, Malthus, Darwin, Adam Smith....

III.

"IF I HAD two lives..." he had written as a schoolboy. Having led the first of those lives as a soldier, he was ready for the second as a politician. Resigning from his regiment early in 1899, he returned to England to stand for, and lose, a by-election. He then temporarily retreated to his other life, wangling an assignment (in spite of an official decree against just that) as both an officer and a correspondent in the Boer War. This had the unintended effect of furthering his parliamentary career. During a skirmish on the armored train that was taking them to their regiment, he and other officers were captured by the Boers. After a month of imprisonment, he alone managed to escape, and in spite of the reward offered for his recapture, he made his way to the front and took part in some hard-fought battles. Returning to England six months later as a celebrity, he had no difficulty winning a seat in Parliament.

Churchill brought to Parliament the same combative spirit that he had displayed in war. A Conservative like his father, he soon found himself (again like his father) at odds with some of his colleagues, and for some of the same reasons. He did not call himself a Tory democrat, but it was that mode of conservatism that dominated his early parliamentary career. His break with the Conservatives in 1904 is usually attributed to his ardent support of free trade as opposed to the protectionism that was gaining strength in the party; but it was as much social issues that motivated him. Indeed, free trade itself was a social issue for him, protectionism meaning, he said, "dear food for the million, cheap labour for the millionaire." His last speech before crossing the aisle was in support of a bill to strengthen trade unionism. Speaking without notes for three-quarters of an hour, he lost the thread of his argument and had to sit down without completing the sentence: "It lies with the government to satisfy the working classes." Soon afterwards, he ostentatiously took the seat that had been occupied by his father when in opposition—a seat, as it happened, next to Lloyd George.

With the victory of the Liberal Party in 1906, Churchill started the ten-year climb upward in his new party, from the Colonial Office to the Board of Trade, the Home Office, and finally the Admiralty. His father's Tory democracy had evolved into the "New Liberalism" of the prewar period, a social-minded and reformist liberalism that Churchill enthusiastically endorsed and that resulted in such major innovations as old age pensions, labor exchanges, the regulation of sweated industries, minimum wages for specified industries, and the National Insurance Act providing for unemployment and health insurance. (The latter was not passed until 1911, by which time Churchill was at the Admiralty, but the details had been worked out by him long before.)

Some historians regard these measures as the precursor of the welfare state. Churchill himself spoke of them at the time as "a big slice of Bismarckism over the whole underside of our industrial system." (Neither Jenkins nor Best mentions the fact that a quarter of a century earlier Randolph Churchill had defended Tory democracy as a substitute for Bismarck's "state socialism.") With his customary bravado, Churchill anticipated and went well beyond the parliamentary reform act of 1911 that limited the House of Lords. He called for the "total abolition" of the upper house or, if this was not politically feasible, a reconstituted body made up of elected members who had demonstrated their commitment to public service.

The more memorable event of this period was Churchill's marriage in 1908, after a whirlwind courtship (again like his father), to Clementine Hozier, ten years his junior, the beautiful and gifted daughter of a titled but rather impecunious family. Unlike his father's marriage, this was an unmitigated success—"one of the most remarkable marriages," Best remarks (after a careful review of the possible contenders), "of any great man in twentieth-century political public life." It was also, perhaps, the most documented marriage of the century, since the two were often apart and were inveterate letter-writers. If most of their children were not as successful—of the four, only the youngest, their daughter Mary, had an untroubled life—it was not because of any lack of love or attention by their parents (here Churchill differed significantly from his father); if anything, it has been suggested, they were too indulgent.

CHURCHILL'S ROLE IN the beginning of World War I, Jenkins observes, was a "mini dress rehearsal" of the first years of World War II. That rehearsal actually started before the outbreak of the war, because it was then, in opposition to his colleagues, that he anticipated and tried to prepare for the war. As head of the Admiralty, Churchill increased the naval budget, improved the conditions of the seamen, and introduced important technical innovations. But the failure of the Dardanelles campaign, for which he was held responsible, and the formation of the National Government led to Churchill's demotion in 1915 to the lowest of cabinet positions, the chancellorship of the duchy of Lancaster. It was then, during a brief period of depression, that he took up painting, a hobby that was to become something of an avocation.

But he soon found something more active to engage him. Resigning the chancellorship, he joined his old regiment with the rank of major. His time with the expeditionary force in France was brief—something less than six months, with short leaves home. A biographer is tempted to dwell on the letters to his wife requesting brandy, chocolates, Stilton cheese, sardines, ham, even "large slabs of corned beef," but not "fancy tinned things." But these sybaritic details, as Best points out, were interspersed with moving messages of love and stoic reflections on life and death. Nor should they distract from the

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Five Poems by Adam Zagajewski

Europe Goes to Sleep

To Gosia

Europe goes to sleep; in Lisbon aging
chessplayers still knit their brows.

Gray fog rises over Kraków
and blurs the contours of venerable sails.

The Mediterranean sways lightly
and will be a lullaby soon.

When Europe is sound asleep at last,
America will keep watch

over the poor mute world
mistrustfully, like a younger sister.

Barbarians

We were the barbarians.
You trembled before us in your palaces.
You awaited us with pounding hearts.
You commented on our languages:
they apparently consist of consonants alone,
of rustles, whispers, and dry leaves.
We were those who lived in the dark forests.
We were what Ovid feared in Tomi,
we were the worshippers of gods with names
you could not pronounce.
But we too knew loneliness
and fear, and began longing for poetry.

Death of a Pianist

While others waged war
or sued for peace, or lay
in narrow beds in hospitals
or camps, for days on end

he practiced Beethoven's sonatas,
and slim fingers, like a miser's,
touched great treasures
that weren't his.

Lindens

So much sweetness—
the city's been anesthetized;
a skinny boy, who barely
takes up space on earth,
and a dog,
and I, a soldier in an unseen war,
and a river I love.
The lindens bloom.

A Flame

God, give us a long winter
and quiet music, and patient mouths,
and a little pride—before
our age ends.
Give us astonishment
and a flame, high, bright.

fact that he did command his battalion, albeit briefly, in dangerous and disagreeable frontline trench warfare, where he displayed his usual reckless bravery. Relieved of his command in May 1916, when his unit was amalgamated with another battalion, he returned to London and to Parliament. The following year, when Asquith was replaced by Lloyd George, Churchill was made minister of munitions, a position that he held until the end of the war.

Jenkins opens his account of the post–World War I period, when Churchill headed first the War Office and then the Colonial Office, by characterizing it as "one of the least creditable periods" of Churchill's career. Best's opening sentence, by contrast, announces it as the beginning of ten years of "considerable celebrity and achievement." Among the events of those years were Churchill's support of the Jewish homeland in Palestine, his condemnation of the British-provoked Amritsar massacre in India, and his spirited opposition to Soviet communism (or Bolshevism, as he always referred to it). Jenkins does not mention the massacre, but he does make much of Churchill's anti-Bolshevism, deeming it "extravagant" in rhetoric and a "debacle" in practice, reinforcing the popular view of Churchill (which Jenkins shares) as a "rash military adventurer." Best denies neither Churchill's rhetorical excesses nor the impracticality of a war against Russia at a time when the country had not yet recovered from the Great War. But the epigraph to his chapter puts the matter in quite another light: "The failure to strangle Bolshevism at birth," he quotes from a speech by Churchill in 1949, "lies heavily on us today."

This episode typifies the fundamental differences between the two biographers. Best, the historian, brings to the book the perspective of history. Churchill, he concedes, was going against the grain of his time, but he was ultimately vindicated by history. "Eighty years later," Best observes, "with the horrific story of Communist Russia behind us, the reader may conclude that Churchill was not so silly after all." Jenkins, the politician, reduces Churchill's "anti-Bolshevik crusade" to nothing more than an adventure (the words "adventure," "adventurer," "adventurism" appear repeatedly here)—and a failed one at that, first because it spoiled his relations with Lloyd George and ruined his chance of getting the coveted chancellorship of the exchequer, and then because it antagonized the Labour Party and the trade unions, who never forgot or forgave him his bloody-minded (as it seemed to them) anti-Bolshevism. To Jenkins, for whom success is judged in political terms (and whose own constituents are Labourites and trade unionists), that double indiscretion was fatal.

When the Liberal Party started to make overtures to Labour in 1923, Churchill (who had lost his seat the previous year) became fearful not only of a pro-Soviet policy abroad but also of a pro-Socialist

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policy at home. "I am what I have always been," he told a former colleague, "a Tory Democrat. Force of circumstances has compelled me to serve with another party, but my views have never changed, and I should be glad to give effect to them by rejoining the Conservatives." The following year he did just that. The victory of the Conservatives brought him the chancellorship of the exchequer.

It was in that role that Churchill earned the enmity of Labour yet again, this time when he helped to suppress the General Strike of 1926. Labour was not appeased by his much more conciliatory role in the miners' strike that followed, when he supported their demands for higher wages and safer working conditions (against the interests of the owners, one of whom was his cousin Lord Londonderry). Nor did they give him credit for introducing legislation for contributory (not means-tested) pensions, more generous funds for social services, a decrease of direct taxes, and an increase of death duties. Here, and consistently throughout his account, Best (unlike Jenkins) sees Churchill as pursuing the same benevolent paternalism, which made him favorably disposed to social reforms and opposed to any social disorder that would be inimical, as he saw it, to the welfare of the people.

The election of 1929 brought in a Labour government and with it the beginning of Churchill's "wilderness years"—his own term for the ten-year period when he was in Parliament but out of office. His unrelenting opposition to dominion status for India (a measure supported by the Conservative leadership) and, even more, his blimpish and near-racist remarks about Gandhi earned him the reputation of arch-imperialist that was to dog him for years to come. Again, we have two very different views of Churchill.

For Jenkins, Churchill's position on India was an almost incomprehensible failure to take the measure of parliamentary opinion, so that he found himself in one of the most futile "blind alleys of modern British politics." In an unusually reflective mood, Jenkins sees this as a rejection of the Lockean world of liberalism (epitomized by Gladstone and Asquith) and an endorsement of the Hobbesian universe of Mussolini. For Best, it reveals a Churchill whose view of the non-Western world was neither Hobbesian nor Lockean, but paternalistic Toryism. Believing that good government rather than self-government was in the best interests of the Indian people, he was convinced that only the Raj could provide the public services that they needed and, more important, preserve the peace between the hostile religious communities. As soon as the British left India, Churchill predicted, Hindus and Moslems would begin to slaughter each other. "The reader must make up his and her own mind," Best comments, "to what extent Churchill's beliefs were absurd." It is obvious that Best himself (although differing with Churchill about the desirability of dominion status for India) does not find those beliefs altogether absurd.

A minor episode (in retrospect, although it did not seem so at the time) of the wilderness years was Churchill's stubborn, almost quixotic defense of Edward VIII during the abdication crisis. The far more momentous event, of course, was the threat of Nazism. Here both biographers pay tribute to Churchill's fortitude and foresight. He was the first British political figure of any note to appreciate the gravity of that threat and to seek to counteract it. As the menace of Nazism became greater, Churchill's voice became more insistent and uncompromising, and his colleagues came to regard him as a "privileged eccentric." When Chamberlain returned from Munich to proclaim "peace with honor," Churchill pronounced it, to the dismay of both his party and his constituency, "a disaster of the first magnitude." A dozen hours after Hitler's invasion of Poland, Churchill was given a seat in the War Cabinet. Eight months later—on the very first day of the Blitzkrieg—he became prime minister of Great Britain.

IV.

For some historians, there is a sharp break between pre-1939 and post-1939 Churchill—between the politician in the wilderness and the statesman leading his country to victory in war. Both of these biographies belie such a view. He was the same Churchill, they say, warts and all (for Jenkins, more warts than not). Best's chapter on the critical early years of the war is titled "His Finest Hour," echoing Churchill's famous phrase "their finest hour" in his Battle of Britain speech delivered just after the collapse of France. (*Their Finest Hour* was also the title of the second volume of his history of the war.) Jenkins's section on the war period bears the ambiguous title "The Saviour of His Country and the Light of the World?" Even without the question mark, the phrases themselves sound ironic. Jenkins is not at all a revisionist in the mode of John Charmley; he does not believe that Britain should have sought an early peace with Germany. But he is suspicious of the motives and the character of the Tory politician—and Churchill remains for him just that, a politician, not a statesman, unworthy of the accolades that so many have bestowed upon him.

The books differ not only in their attitude toward Churchill, but also in their account of this critical period in the country's history. Best, the military historian, focuses on the war itself, while Jenkins, the politician, never loses sight of Parliament and partisan politics. Each does admirably well what he does, but there are times when a reader might think that they were speaking of different times and places. Jenkins also adheres to a more rigorously chronological narrative, while Best, except when he is relating the course of the war, is more discursive and reflective. The chronological structure is in one sense more faithful to the historical reality, showing it in all its confusion and contingency, with battles, parliamentary affairs, travel, family, food, drink, money, and books all jostling each other and competing for attention (the reader's attention as well as Churchill's). Best, less time-bound, is able to give a more rounded and coherent picture of the period. Neither book, however, quite captures the drama of the crucial time in May 1940—a fortnight in most accounts, five days in John Lukacs's book of that title—that started out so ominously and ended not in victory but in survival. If America and Russia helped to win the war, Lukacs points out, in May it was Churchill "who did not lose it." And that was the prerequisite and the prelude to victory.

The victory was finally qualified, thanks to the other victors. Again, it is the "great men" of history who figure so largely in this story. Roosevelt and Stalin did not merely reflect the will of their countrymen; to a considerable degree, they created that will. Churchill, having fulfilled his juvenile aspirations to be a soldier and a politician, was now called upon to be a diplomat as well. But his diplomatic resourcefulness was tried to the limit by his relations with the two allies who pursued their own policies and purposes as vigorously as he did his. At Yalta and again at Potsdam, he was obliged to settle for much less than he would have liked. He won the war, but he did not entirely win the peace.

At this point there is a curious lacuna in both of these biographies. In his prologue, Best tells us that he used "Churchill's own words as much as possible, finding no good reason to let my prose or anyone else's take precedence over that of one of the great masters of the English language." Yet where Churchill's words were more telling than ever, where they played a decisive part in history, we have only Best's assurance—given in his words, not Churchill's—that this was so. He rebukes one historian, too young to have experienced them himself, for scoffing at "the myth of Churchill in-

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spiring the nation huddled round its crackling wireless sets." It was not a myth and they did not crackle, Best protests. People listened to the broadcasts everywhere, in homes and pubs, in factories and air-raid shelters, as if they were religious occasions.

Those speeches had the effect not only of maintaining popular morale and the national spirit at a time when there was every reason to be demoralized and dispirited, but also of arousing Britons to their historic responsibility, a responsibility not only to themselves but to the world. Best rises to the occasion in a Hegelian spirit: "His speeches set them on a world stage, somewhere few had ever dreamed of ever finding themselves, defending values important for the world at large. Their survival was to mean more than the survival of their insular selves, it meant the survival of civilization and freedom." Unfortunately, the reader can appreciate the speeches only vicariously, for Best is curiously sparing in quoting from them. In his hundred-odd pages on the war period, we are given paragraph-length excerpts from only four of the speeches, and isolated sentences from a few others. (Yet he is not averse to quotations; there are thirty from other sources.)

Jenkins agrees, although much less eloquently, upon the importance of the speeches. They were "an inspiration for the nation, and a catharsis for Churchill himself," and several phrases from them "have reverberated down the decades," and the radio broadcasts were the most famous in the history of the medium. But he does not conceal his own distaste for their "rhetorical flourishes," "high-flown eloquence," and the "'all cymbals-clashing' peroration" that was so characteristic of them. In the two hundred twenty-five pages on this period, including well over fifty paragraph-length quotations, only six are from Churchill's speeches, one of which, the famous "we shall fight on the beaches" peroration, appears in a footnote accompanied by the almost derisive comment that it "must have been parodied at least a hundred times." A lengthy account of a parliamentary debate in the critical days of May 1940—a debate, Jenkins says, that "transformed the history of the next five years"—has excerpts from four other participants but only one trivial sentence from Churchill's fifty-minute speech.

The Battle of Britain speech does earn Jenkins's praise as comparable to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address—longer, he says, but in places almost as memorable. But after quoting the "finest hour" passage, Jenkins goes on immediately to discuss a secret session of the House of Commons held two days later, neglecting to remind the reader that that speech was repeated on the radio that evening, and that that night brought the first major air raid on England, which made the speech even more memorable. In truth, Churchill's speeches, on the radio, in the Commons, and reprinted in the newspapers each day (there are seven volumes of wartime speeches and another five of postwar speeches), were not mere "rhetoric." They were as much the hard facts of history, shaping the course of events, as the deliberations and disputations of Parliament that Jenkins treats at such length.

Nor was it for merely rhetorical purposes that Churchill assumed the role of spokesman as well as commander-in-chief of the nation. This, too, was a part of his Tory democratic heritage. Like Disraeli, he did genuinely believe in a nation that had an integral unity transcending class and political divisions—with himself as the representative of that nation. This was the meaning of his famous speech responding to tributes to him on the occasion of his eightieth birthday: "It was a nation and a race dwelling all around the globe that had the lion's heart. I had the luck to be called upon to give the roar." *The Roar of the Lion* was a fitting title to one of the volumes in his own history of the war—a more modest title than Manchester's *The Last Lion*, which seriously distorts the meaning of Churchill's metaphor. Churchill did not see himself as the lion; the British people were that. He was their voice.

V.

"Victory in Europe and Defeat in Britain," Jenkins titles one chapter, as if the two events were commensurable—the victory against the Nazi terror that threatened to engulf the world, and the defeat of the Conservatives in the election at home. There is no occasion in this chapter, or indeed in any of Jenkins's subsequent ones, for reflection on what the victory meant for Britain or the world (or, conversely, what a defeat would have meant), or what Yalta and Potsdam (both included in this chapter) meant for the victory, or, for that matter, what the relationship was between the military victory and the electoral defeat.

Jenkins attributes the defeat to an inept campaign by Churchill, including one address that was "so over the top" in castigating socialism as a form of tyranny that even his admirers, let alone the electorate, were put off by it. Best, who also cites this passage, provides a different interpretation of the defeat. He reminds us (as Jenkins, otherwise so attentive to parliamentary affairs, does not) of the Ministry of Reconstruction that was formed as early

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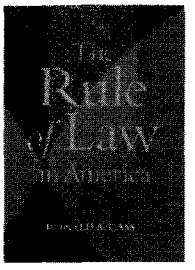

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as 1943 to prepare for postwar Britain, and of the series of White Papers that proposed major reforms in housing, health, education, social security, and the like. These proposals, Best explains, which Churchill had viewed at the time as part of "the logic of total war," helped to prepare the way for the victory of Labour after the war—a victory that was not so much a defeat for Churchill personally as for his party. "Whatever the people's affection and respect for the hero who had won the war," Best explains, "too many of them did not trust the party he had come to head."

Even then, at the age of seventy and in ill health, Churchill did not go gently into the night. He started to write (or to supervise the writing of) the six volumes on World War II. He served in Parliament as a very vocal leader of the opposition. And he remained on the world stage as a counsel of caution and alarm. Just as he had taken the initiative in warning Britain of the threat of Germany before World War I and again before World War II, so he now warned the world of the threat of Stalin. His famous Fulton address in 1946 (delivered at the small college in Missouri that has been memorialized by that event) is said to have ushered in the Cold War. The realities of that conflict were already evident, but it took Churchill's metaphor of the "iron curtain" descending upon the continent "from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic" to galvanize the public and, more reluctantly, the leaders and the foreign offices of the West. He may have been out of power at home, but he was still a formidable moral—and therefore political—force in the world.

Churchill's return as prime minister in 1951 was almost anti-climactic. Jenkins is not alone in thinking that he was then "gloriously unfit for office." Best describes him as a "wet" in politics, more conciliatory to the welfare state than hard-line Conservatives, and more favorable to a united Europe than present-day Euroskeptics. Perhaps because the European Union has emerged as a major issue in British politics today, both biographers (Jenkins served for a time as president of the European Commission in Brussels) make much of Churchill's ambivalence on that subject, pointing out that his commitment to it was qualified by his simultaneous and no less staunch commitment to the British Commonwealth and to the "special relationship" with the United States. Advocates of the European Union today cannot take much comfort in a remark that he made privately: "I want a Europe to evolve on British lines, but, hopefully, without the British!"

Churchill resigned as prime minister in 1955 at the age of eighty, and remained an almost silent member of Parliament (he was re-elected four years later) until his death in January 1965. In a few spare sentences, Jenkins describes Churchill's funeral, the first great state burial for a non-royal person since Gladstone's in 1898 (and Gladstone's the first since Wellington's in 1852). Best devotes two pages to that event, starting with the three hundred thousand people who waited in the bitter cold outside of Westminster Hall, where Churchill was lying in state; the many thousands of others who witnessed the procession to St. Paul's and lined the banks of the Thames, where the body was being conveyed to Waterloo Station for transport to Blenheim Park; and the three and a half million television viewers who watched this extraordinary spectacle, including the dramatic moment when the great cranes along the river dipped their masts in tribute as the launch went by.

COURTESY FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX

Churchill and Eisenhower in Tunis, 1943

With the same brevity, Jenkins closes his thousand-page book with a single short paragraph comparing Churchill with Gladstone, the latter "the greatest Prime Minister of the nineteenth century," the former "the greatest of the twentieth century." Repeating the remark in his preface, he reminds us that he had started by thinking Gladstone the greater man "by a narrow margin," but had finally given the edge to Churchill. "I now put Churchill, with all his idiosyncrasies, his indulgences, his occasional childishness, but also his genius, his tenacity and his persistent ability, right or wrong, successful or unsuccessful, to be larger than life, as the greatest human being ever to occupy 10 Downing Street." 10 Downing Street: Jenkins can think of no greater tribute to his subject. It is an odd tribute for a man whose greatest achievements came not in his official role as prime minister but in his self-appointed role, in and outside of Parliament, as the spokesman and the leader of his nation and of the free world. It is odder still to find him compared with Gladstone, as if home rule for Ireland were equivalent to the Battle for Britain.

In his considerably shorter book, Best finds room for an epilogue taking the measure of his subject. Making due allowances for Churchill's idiosyncrasies and indulgences, his egoism and arrogance, he accords him a "larger than life" greatness far surpassing the prime ministership. He quotes Clement Attlee, the leader of the Labour Party, who went beyond the normal pieties of the obituary genre to pay homage to "one of the greatest men that history records." Best himself, as a historian, accords him that historic significance: "What he did for the good of his country and, it is not extravagant to say, for Western civilization was what no other person on the political stage at those times could have done. He did what the more dogmatic critics of 'great man theory' doubt that even the greatest of men can do: he changed the apparent course of history."

"Western civilization": it is not a term in good repute today. Most academics use it, if at all, ensconced in quotation marks, as if to distance themselves from it, to deny its reality or to impugn its validity, disparaging it as ethnocentric, colonialist, even racist. Yet in the context of Hitler's assault on the West (and not only on Britain), surely Best is right in looking upon Churchill as the "saviour" not only of his country but also of Western civilization—of the principles of law and liberty that have evolved over the centuries and have been embodied in the ideas, the institutions, and the traditions of the West.

Still, Best concludes on a sadder note. The virtues that gave Churchill that emi-

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nence, he ruefully observes, are not those generally admired today.

> One might not lament the end of "glory," but what about "chivalry" and "honour"? There must be improvement of some kind in the fact that the concept of "dying for your country" no longer provides the model of an ideal death; but there may not be much of an improvement in not knowing whether there is anything in your country worth fighting for, whether you belong to this country or to that, or even whether you belong to any distinctive country at all. I am persuaded that, in this later time, we are diminished if, admitting Churchill's failings and failures, we can no longer appreciate his virtues and victories.

In a sense, Best himself belies those words, for his book reminds us that it is still possible, at a time when irony and cynicism are so much the fashion, to pay tribute to greatness without being hagiographical, to recognize "failings and failures" while being properly appreciative of "virtues and victories." We are also reminded that it is not only we who are diminished by our inability to appreciate greatness. It is history itself, the past itself, that is diminished, and also distorted. In a passionate (and frankly eulogistic) essay written in 1949, Isaiah Berlin observed that Churchill's "strongest sense is the sense of the past," that it was through his vision of the past that Churchill conceived both the present and the future.

We have had occasion recently to recall the past—Churchill's past as well as our own—and to find in it intimations of our present and future. Among other things that we are rediscovering in the past is the idea of greatness—great individuals, great causes, great civilizations. It is no accident that Churchill has re-emerged now, at a time when the West is again under assault. And it is no small comfort to be reminded of the spirit that triumphed over far greater odds in a far more perilous time. ■

The Rubble Artist

By JOHN BANVILLE

Austerlitz
by W. G. Sebald
translated by Anthea Bell

(Random House, 298 pp., $25.95)

FOR A NOVELIST, the Holocaust is at once a safe subject and a dangerous subject. Safe, because the emotional reaction of practically all readers will be already primed; dangerous, because almost any attempt to deal imaginatively with a crime that is well nigh unimaginable is likely to result in bathos. There is also the moral question of whether an artist has the right to turn such horrors into the stuff of art; Adorno was sure he knew the answer to that one, while even the supremely scrupulous Celan was criticized for the musical beauty of his death-camp poem "Deathfugue." Perhaps the most succinct statement of the matter was made by Larkin, who in a comment on a poem about another twentieth-century catastrophe said that he had used Roman numerals for the title of "MCMXIV" because "once you've said Nineteen Fourteen, everything after that is superfluous."

It would be an injustice to W. G. Sebald to suggest that he has made the Shoah his subject. Indeed, it would be an injustice to claim that he has a "subject" as such, unless it be the *lachrimae rerum* in general. His books deal with a bewildering range of topics, from the works of Thomas Browne to the loves of Henri Beyle, via the history of silk-making and the ground plan of the fortress of Breendonk outside Antwerp, and cover a very great deal of ground, from the mud flats of East Anglia through an artist's studio up a yard in Manchester to the killing fields of Croatia. Always in the background, however, is the dark echo of the persecution and the murder of the Jews.

Sebald's work is reminiscent of the stories of Borges, of the mysterious pictorial conundrums of Escher, of the precisely vague films of Resnais, though he is much more emotionally affecting than any of those overly cerebral magicians. He is perhaps a direct descendant of Kafka, except

JOHN BANVILLE's most recent novel is *Eclipse* (Picador).

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that Sebald's books are blessedly free of the transcendent boringness that breathes out grayly from Kafka's novels, though not from the stories or the diaries. Anyway, seeking influences is particularly fruitless in the case of Sebald, for he is unique.

His books—it is hard to know what else to call them; his paperback publisher employs categories such as "fiction/travel/history," but why stop there?—have appeared in English in a chronologically jumbled fashion. What seems to have been the first one, *Vertigo*, was first published in German in 1990 and appeared in Britain in 1999; *The Emigrants* came out in German in 1992, and in English in 1996; *The Rings of Saturn*, one of his best-known works but not necessarily his best, was published in Frankfurt in 1995 and in London in 1998; and now comes *Austerlitz*. The first three books were very finely translated by Michael Hulse—that is to say, the English into which Hulse turned them is very fine—while the translator of the new one is Anthea Bell. It may be that Sebald, who came relatively late to fiction writing, or at least to publishing fiction in book form, has by now achieved a poised immaculacy of style that was not quite there before, but certainly *Austerlitz*, in Bell's pristine translation, strikes a more profound and more moving note than that sounded in the earlier books.

WINFRIED GEORG MAXIMILIAN Sebald was born in Wertach im Allgäu, in Bavaria, in 1944. He studied in Freiburg, later in Switzerland, and then in Manchester, where he moved in 1966. In 1970, he transferred to the University of East Anglia, where he has been professor of European literature since 1987, and where he was the first director of the British Centre for Literary Translation, a vigorous and very necessary organization in a country that remains resolutely suspicious of literature not written in English. East Anglia was also the college where the first creative-writing course in England was instituted, run by, among others, Angus Wilson and Malcolm Bradbury, and numbering among its graduates Ian McEwan and Kazuo Ishiguro. The characterizing marks of the East Anglia school are a plain prose style largely free of metaphorical frills, and a fascination with the eerie depths underlying the most ordinary-seeming lives. Although Sebald is not connected with the famous course, his work does bear a superficial resemblance to that of Ishiguro and McEwan. The difference is that he is an infinitely greater artist than either of them.

Sebald's effects are achieved through what seems a sort of superhuman self-control. The narrative walks along at a steady unvarying stride, matching its pace to that of the peripatetic narrator, who is forever on the move, whether ambling through the Norfolk Broads, or down the shell-shocked streets of postwar Manchester, or over the bridges and along the alleyways of Prague. The browser flicking through these books, with their dense, dialogue-free pages amply illustrated with blurry, anonymous, and yet curiously affecting photographs, will acknowledge the veracity of the description "travel/history," but will wonder where the "fiction" comes in. Sebald's work probably requires an entirely new category.

IT HAS BEEN apparent since literary modernism guttered out in the *nouveau roman* that fiction would have to find new forms if it was to survive. Signs of a possible instauration have been appearing in the past couple of decades. Claudio Magris's *Danube*, a novel of ideas cunningly disguised as a travel book, which Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* uncannily resembles, and Roberto Calasso's *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony* pointed out possible new directions, while the extraordinary popular success of Milan Kundera's essay-fictions—who would have expected that a book that opens with a citation from Nietzsche, as does *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, could ever become a best-seller?—showed to novelists, and, not insignificantly, to publishers and booksellers, that the reading public was ready for a new kind of literature, and would welcome books that flouted the categories.

Sebald is a triumphant culmination of that process of change and experimentation, though his work has all the marks of a new beginning. To the hurrying eye in search of plot, characters, dialogue, these books will appear flat and cold. The text looks dauntingly clotted: the first paragraph of *Austerlitz* is twenty-five pages long, and toward the middle there is a sentence, a marvelous sentence, describing the detention camp at Terezín, that lasts for seven pages. The photographs, viewed out of context, can seem positively twee, and sometimes they do indeed smack of literal-mindedness: one finds oneself recalling the BBC television comedy sketch mocking the illustrative obsessions of the compilers of newscasts, in which mention of the government position of Lord Privy Seal is backed by shots of Jesus Christ, an outdoor lavatory, and an aquatic mammal balancing a ball on its nose.

But Sebald knows what he is up to. At the bottom of page fifty-nine of *The Rings of Saturn*, in a passage about an English eccentric, a certain Major Le Strange, we are told in the very last line that he was with an anti-tank regiment that liberated Bergen-Belsen in 1945; and when the page is turned it is a genuine shock to be confronted by a two-page spread showing bodies piled at random in a pine wood. Less direct, but no less effective, are the three pages in *Austerlitz* illustrating doorways in the present-day town of Terezín, the third of which unerringly resembles the door of a gas chamber. (An incidental source of speculation is where these photographs come from—Sebald must spend a lot of time in junk shops—and whether the writer searches them out to illustrate the text or allows the pictures themselves to direct the narrative.)

THE TONE OF all Sebald's books is vaguely autobiographical, mainly in the sense that they seem to chart something of the writer's inner life, his struggles, speculations, nervous turmoils. In *Austerlitz* there is a gruesome photograph, from a museum of veterinary medicine in Paris, of a three-foot-high tree of bronchial tubes, its "petrified and rust-coloured branches looking like coral growths," which might be an emblem in general of Sebald's somber, inward, uncanny books. Of Sebald himself we learn little of a concrete nature. He is an unenthusiastic teacher, he has a wife, he likes to hike about the countryside in solitude but with a lively curiosity. There are hints of serious inner troubles, losses, breakdowns. A description in *Austerlitz* of writer's block is as immediate and as horribly compelling as the predicament of Lord Chandos in Hofmannsthal's "Letter"; the process that begins with writing being "such hard going that it often took me a whole day to compose a single sentence, and no sooner had I thought such a sentence out, with the greatest effort, and written it down, than I saw the awkward falsity of my constructions and the inadequacy of all the words I had employed," and it ends with the character feeling "in my head the dreadful torpor that heralds disintegration of the personality," and sensing that "in truth I had neither memory nor the power of thought, nor even any existence, that all my life had been a constant process of obliteration, a turning away from myself and the world."

The character thus afflicted is not Sebald, or even "Sebald," but the book's eponymous central character. *Austerlitz* is cast in a form reminiscent of Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew* and Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." One day in the 1960s, on a visit to Antwerp, the nameless narrator, whom we are to understand is Sebald himself, encounters in the waiting room of that city's baroque Central Station a solitary traveler like himself, "a man who then, in 1967, appeared almost youthful, with fair, curiously wavy

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hair of a kind I had seen elsewhere only on the German hero Siegfried in Fritz Lang's *Nibelungen* film." This man is Austerlitz. The dreamy drift here, from the man's appearance to the recollection of a movie, is typical of Sebald's method. Over the ensuing three decades the two men meet, occasionally but momentously, and Austerlitz's story gradually emerges.

Having been brought up in a small town in Wales "in the home of a Calvinist preacher and former missionary called Emyr Elias who was married to a timid-natured Englishwoman"—this extended Welsh episode is a bravura piece of mock-Gothic description that is at once deeply gloomy and highly comic—the boy discovers, when Elias has descended into madness, that he is not a son of the manse, but that he was fostered by the Eliases. His real name is Jacques Austerlitz. After many years of dogged detective work, he succeeds in uncovering the identity of his parents. They were the Prague businessman and political activist Maximilian Aychenwald and his actress wife Agáta, both Jews. When war came, his parents sent him to England, and shortly afterwards Maximilian fled to Paris, intending that Agáta should follow, but next day the German tanks rolled into Prague, and she was trapped. Eventually Agáta was sent to Terezín, and perished there or in one of the extermination camps.

Sebald's narrative control in the recounting of this terrible tale is remarkable. The creeping horror of the fate of the Austerlitzes is communicated all the more effectively because the narrative never raises its voice. Instead it maintains a masterly and unnerving evenness of tone. The moment, toward the close of the book, when we are finally shown a photograph of a woman who is almost certainly Agáta, is one of the most moving moments that a reader is likely to encounter in modern literature. There are passages of breathless beauty in this book, as when Austerlitz describes watching in slow motion a propaganda film of life in the Terezín camp: "The men and women employed in the workshops now looked as if they were toiling in their sleep, so long did it take them to draw needle and thread through the air as they stitched, so heavily did their eyelids sink, so slowly did their lips move as they looked up wearily at the camera." Mysteriously lovely, too, is the account of a performance by a traveling circus that Austerlitz attends in Paris, at the end of which the whole troupe, accompanied by a white goose, gathers to play on a motley of instruments a tune that Austerlitz does not recognize but that moves him deeply. Looking back, however,

it seems to me as if the mystery which

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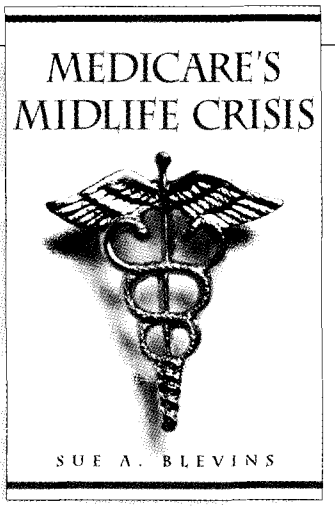

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> touched me at the time was summed up in the image of the snow-white goose standing motionless and steadfast among the musicians as long as they played. Neck craning forward slightly, pale eyelids slightly lowered, it listened there in the tent beneath that shimmering firmament of painted stars until the last notes had died away, as if it knew its own future and the fate of its present companions.

The Europe through which Sebald, or his narrator, wanders is not the Europe of treaties and economic miracles and social progress. The eye that he casts upon his continent is cold and utterly undeceived. The places that he visits are not the grand boulevards, the glittering esplanades, the statued parks, but the unconsidered corners, the bricked-over wastelands and soulless architectural sites. There is a splendidly disgusted visit to Paris's new Bibliothèque Nationale on the quai François Mauriac, a building "devised ... on purpose to instill a sense of insecurity and humiliation in the poor readers," where the reverberations of catastrophe are still unmistakably to be felt. For Sebald, the "new" Europe is as neat and clean and orderly as the vast cemeteries in Flanders where the fallen of World War I are laid out under row upon endless row of white crosses.

The seriousness of Sebald's endeavor is plain and impressive. His work is nothing less than a chronicle of the end of a civilization. Europe, Sebald is telling us, committed suicide in the first half of the twentieth century, and what remains is, for all the carefully applied cosmetics, a lifeless object of desperate veneration and uneasy nostalgia, like Lenin's corpse in its mausoleum in Red Square. As Austerlitz remarks of the Palace of Justice on Gallows Hill in Brussels, "At the most we gaze at it in wonder, a kind of wonder which in itself is a form of dawning horror, for somehow we know by instinct that outsized buildings cast the shadow of their own destruction before them, and are designed from the first with an eye to their later existence as ruins."

Austerlitz itself is a kind of majestic and mysterious ruin, a place of secret chambers, of hushed and anonymous spaces, of star-shaped structures crouching in silence under glass domes and peopled by the dead, and by the living dead. Yet for all its bleakness, this book, like Sebald's other books, is peculiarly invigorating and, dare one say, filled with hope, of no matter how tentative a variety. Sebald's voice is speaking out of the rubble, erecting the edifice of art. ■

Words and Tumbrels

By DAVID A. BELL

A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France by Sophia Rosenfeld

(Stanford University Press, 410 pp., $60)

I.

"WORDS, LIKE things, have been monstrosities," wrote the reactionary critic Jean-François de La Harpe in the wake of the French Revolution, and it is hard to disagree with him. The Terror's leading figures justified the unjustifiable with a creative mendacity that can still evoke shudders. "Terror is nothing but ... an emanation of virtue" (Robespierre). "Sacrifice two hundred thousand heads, and you will save a million" (Marat). "Every new faction will discover death in the mere thought of crime" (Robespierre). "Following the orders that you gave me I have crushed children under the feet of horses, massacred women who at least ... will engender no more brigands. I have no prisoners with which to reproach myself" (General Westermann in the Vendée).

Not surprisingly, historians have been fascinated by French Revolutionary language since the events themselves. It makes for a vast field of study, for the Revolutionaries obsessively discussed, justified, and commemorated everything that they did or tried to do. "The world thinks," Michelet once remarked. "France speaks." And speaks, and speaks: in the decade following 1789, French politics floated on a great crashing tide of words, written down in newspapers and pamphlets and meticulously preserved by archivists and librarians. The most ambitious microform collection to date, which includes only a tiny percentage of the available material, numbers 1,145,000 pages and fills 26,000 separate fiches.

Yet it is only in the last twenty years or so that Revolutionary language itself, as opposed to warfare, or political factions, or social class, has become the central preoccupation of the leading historians of the upheaval. This shift is owed to the broader "linguistic turn" taken by the human sciences over the past generation. Whereas scholars once tended to treat political language as the product or the reflection of "deeper" social and political forces, they now argue that things are never so simple and transparent, and that language helps to structure the very reality that it describes. Moreover, since reality can only be perceived through the deceptive veils of linguistic representations, the representations themselves necessarily constitute the historian's first object of study. The French Revolution has served as a sort of laboratory for "post–linguistic turn" history, and in the process our understanding of it has radically changed.

The scholarly trip has been an exciting one, but not without its drawbacks. The fascination with the careful parsing and dissection of speeches and pamphlets, engravings and statues, has tended to obscure the great human drama of the Revolution, so vividly conveyed in the nineteenth century by Michelet and Thomas Carlyle and more recently by R. R. Palmer and Simon Schama. The new work also puts an almost exclusive emphasis on the small percentage of the French—mostly bourgeois or noble, and mostly male—who had the education and the leisure to engage in high-level political debate. François Furet, the pioneering figure in the new Revolutionary history, once wrote with unconscious condescension that "the revolutionary lower classes continued to confuse the grain issue with politics," as if feeding a starving population mattered less on some existential level than high-minded debates about the embodiment of the general will. Finally, the new work tends to return discussion of the origins of the Revolution to the even smaller percentage of the French who engaged in high-level political debate before 1789, and especially the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment. Since the generation of 1789 itself often ascribed the Revolution

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entirely to the action of the *philosophes*, we have now come full circle.

It is one thing to state these drawbacks, but it is quite another thing to overcome them: to place the Revolution back into a fuller historical canvas, and to relate its politics to something other than the elite languages of political theory, without throwing out the lessons of the linguistic turn. It is in this context that Sophia Rosenfeld's book is such a welcome development. At first sight it would not seem the most likely work to suggest a path that historians can follow out of their current dilemmas. It is itself an intellectual history, concentrated on the same small number of elites who have already received such intensive examination. Within these limits it ranges marvelously over such different fields as ballet, pantomime, hieroglyphics, telegraphy, and the education of the deaf, but always with a penchant for the theory over the practice. Readers drawn to the Revolution by Simon Schama's palpitating prose will find little drama in Rosenfeld's detailed explications of philosophical debates, and her sinuous, complex sentences. And yet her book represents a significant advance.

II.

To understand Rosenfeld's contribution, a little more needs to be said about the school of historical writing with which she is engaging, and especially the historiographical legacy of Furet, the twentieth century's greatest historian of the Revolution. Following a brief youthful fling with the French Communist Party in the years after World War II, Furet became a lifelong anti-Communist, consumed with the question of how revolutionary regimes turn radically repressive. According to the Marxist orthodoxy in vogue in France at the time, the Revolution had radicalized because of a pitiless class conflict between bourgeois and aristocrats, and because France's enemies threatened to destroy the Revolution, forcing its leaders to adopt exceptionally harsh measures in self-defense. (French Communists made similar arguments on behalf of Stalin.)

In the 1970s, Furet brilliantly exploded these assumptions, showing that they were nothing but a repetition of the excuses that had been offered by the architects of the Terror themselves. Drawing on Anglo-American work mostly ignored by his French colleagues, he pointed out that the competing Revolutionary factions did not come from significantly different social backgrounds. As for the "circumstances" of war and civil war, they had certainly placed the radical Jacobin regime in desperate danger in 1793–1794, when France faced an Austro-Prussian assault from the east and several internal revolts. But when the military threats receded, the pace of executions did not slacken in its turn. In fact, it accelerated. The Terror had a momentum independent of "circumstances."

In place of the Marxist orthodoxy, Furet offered his own theory of radicalization in 1978, in a brilliantly difficult essay called "The Revolution is Over." The crucial factors behind the Terror, he argued, were neither social nor economic nor military, but purely ideological. For the years 1789–1794 were a moment in which political language became detached from social interests and took on a life of its own. Centuries of absolute monarchy, combined with the powerful influence of Rousseau's political philosophy, had left French elites in thrall to the idea that sovereignty was utterly indivisible, and based on a single, necessarily unitary national will. As a result, any notion of governmental checks and balances, or of a "loyal opposition," was absurd to them. The line between disagreement and treason was vanishingly thin.

In such an atmosphere, competing political factions could establish their legitimacy only by posing as the sole authentic voice of the people, and in this game the most aggressively egalitarian and violent stance always won out. From the beginning, therefore, Revolutionary politics amounted to a fatally unstable

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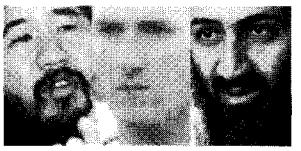

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spiral into Terror, as faction after faction rushed to embrace ever more radical and populist positions: the subjection of the Catholic church to state management; universal manhood suffrage; the replacement of the monarchy by a republic; the execution of King Louis XVI; price controls; the abolition of Christianity; draconian "Revolutionary justice" for dissenters; the utter extermination of the Revolution's enemies. The repressed and fanatical Robespierre played the game best of all, casting himself as the pure avenging angel of the popular will. But finally, like an infernal machine pushed far beyond its operating parameters, the whole system violently collapsed in the coup d'état of the Ninth of Thermidor, in which Robespierre was arrested and guillotined.

An avowed Tocquevillian liberal, Furet had little in common with such patron saints of French postmodernism as Foucault or Derrida, but his arguments resonated with theirs in surprising ways. His notion that the Revolutionaries were fundamentally incapable of thinking in terms of mixed government and genuinely contestatory politics recalled Foucault's vision of the power of hegemonic "discourses" throughout a culture. Furet's description of Revolutionary politics as an unstable "semiotic circuit," and his emphasis on language rather than individuals as the driving force behind events, recalled Derrida's remarks on the primacy of texts over authors, and on the ways that texts constantly subvert their own authority. And so Furet offered a form of history well suited to the linguistic turn that these French philosophers were helping to inspire across the human sciences.

It took an American historian, Lynn Hunt, to make the connection explicit, in her book *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, which appeared in 1984. Unlike Furet's essays, Hunt's work steered clear of the jagged edges of contemporary French politics. Starting with the words of La Harpe quoted above, Hunt splendidly highlighted the way language itself served as an instrument of political change in Revolutionary France. She argued that Revolutionary reforms such as the new rational calendar, the new forms of political ritual (solemn oath-takings, the burial of political heroes in a national Pantheon, grandiose national festivals), and new national symbols (notably a massive Hercules representing the People as an indomitable Colossus) represented considerably more than simply propaganda, or an outgrowth of Revolutionary utopianism. They amounted, in Hunt's view, to nothing less than "the institution of a dramatically new political culture," centered on democratic republicanism and the "compelling intensity of revolutionary change." Given that the Revolutionaries in the end failed to overturn France's social structure or centralized system of government, this new culture constituted their principal accomplishment and legacy. Hunt's book has become a classic of what she herself dubbed "the new cultural history," an American movement conducted very much under the sign of the linguistic turn.

THE MOST RIGOROUS application of linguistic analysis to the Revolution has come from the pen of Keith Michael Baker. His densely written *Inventing the French Revolution*, published in 1990, drew eclectically and eruditely on such diverse sources as German *Begriffsgeschichte* (the "history of concepts"), Foucault's "archaeology of knowledge," and Quentin Skinner's history of political languages. But on the question of the relationship between language and historical reality, Baker's book was absolutely uncompromising. Furet and Hunt had erred, Baker asserted, in assuming that political language had exercised an unusual and extraordinary power during the French Revolution. Politics, he insisted, is always and everywhere a linguistic phenomenon: a contest for linguistic authority. "Social interests" do not exist independently of the language that gave them meaning. "The action of a rioter in picking up a stone can no more be understood apart from the symbolic field that gives it meaning than the action of a priest in picking up a sacramental vessel."

Unlike Hunt, with her sweeping panorama of symbols and rituals, Baker concentrated more dryly on the history of particular words: "public opinion," "constitution," "representation," "revolution." The chapter on the last of these momentous terms offered a particularly clear illustration of Baker's method. Before the late eighteenth century, he showed, the range of meanings that we now attribute to the word "revolution" simply did not exist. When the French talked of revolutions, they meant political events that were unpredictable, disorderly, rapid, and largely beyond human control. (The word had already largely lost its original sense of a return to a point of origin.) In no sense were revolutions seen as planned occurrences that could extend into an indefinite future.

People did not make revolutions, according to Baker. Revolutions happened to them. Therefore the noun and the adjective "revolutionary" did not exist, and would have struck contemporaries as nonsensical. Yet during the second half of the eighteenth century, as French political writers engaged in increasingly acerbic and open public debate, the range of meanings for "revolution" gradually expanded; and by 1789 the word had come to denote more or less what it does today. Only with this "invention" of the concept, Baker audaciously claimed, could the thing itself—the French Revolution—have taken place.

Baker's theory was hugely controversial. Does a thing have to have a name in order to exist? (The classic example is the feeling known as *schadenfreude*.) But a "revolution," in the modern sense, is not simply a "thing," but an intellectual construct. We can speak, if we wish, of an "Aztec revolution," but could Aztecs have seen themselves as "revolutionaries," engaged in a conscious project of reshaping the human world in accordance with their own wishes, and without any reference to the divine? For that matter, could the French of 1750 have seen themselves as "revolutionaries" in this sense? And if not, could they have carried out anything like the Revolution of 1789 forty years before the fact? Baker compellingly suggested that they could not have done so, and thereby he gave powerful support to Furet's and Hunt's view of the Revolution as first and foremost an upheaval in the realm of culture and ideas.

BAKER'S WORK HAS been widely attacked, but I do not believe that it has been convincingly refuted. In combination with Furet's and Hunt's books, it has fundamentally re-oriented the study of the "age of revolution," turning historians back from investigations of personalities and war and class struggle to where the entire subject began: to the Enlightenment, and the great effusion of ideas that preceded the Revolution's great effusion of hope and blood. Baker's description of the political culture of the *ancien régime* as a virtual terra incognita became the phrase that launched a thousand dissertations.

Yet it is precisely on this terrain that Baker's linguistic analysis has been most unsatisfying. Why *did* French political culture change in the manner he describes? Why *did* the modern concept of "revolution" take shape? Baker, a good student of the linguistic turn, refuses to attribute these linguistic phenomena to "deeper" social causes, rejecting the notion that culture can only be set into shuddering motion by shifts in the tectonic plates of society and the economy. He is equally uncomfortable giving principal credit to a few great minds—making the Revolution *la faute à Rousseau*, as the French phrase has it. He dislikes the very term "Enlightenment," judging it a label retroactively slathered across a somewhat arbitrarily designated set of canonical thinkers. In

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good Foucauldian fashion, he prefers to trace the flow of impersonal "discourses" through a broad intellectual field, giving equal weight to famous *philosophes* and to minor figures of interest principally to specialists: Jacob-Nicolas Moreau alongside Voltaire; Chrétien-Guillaume de Malesherbes next to Montesquieu; Guillaume-Joseph Saige in the company of Rousseau.

For Baker, the ultimate motive force is language itself: "At the limit, no one is safe from the potential play of discursivity." Thus he has constructed a model in which French politics "burst out of the absolutist mold" in the 1750s, when the symbolic authority of France's monarch broke apart into separate discourses that considered sovereignty as essentially grounded in justice, reason, or will. In the end, it was the "discourse of will," expressed most forcefully by Rousseau (but not only by him), that prevailed: a way of thinking about politics that ascribed sovereign legitimacy solely to the general and unanimous will of the entire population. With this discourse's success, Montesquieu's idea of dividing and limiting sovereign power came to seem nonsensical to most of the leading figures in political debate, who now concentrated their efforts on finding a way to embody the general will. This shift set in motion the revolutionary dynamic of radicalization described by Baker's close friend and collaborator Furet. The Terror began with an idea of sovereignty.

It is a strikingly abstract and colorless vision of political change, although one supported at every point by meticulous and often brilliant readings of the texts in question. Baker's story seems to have taken place in an altogether different dimension of existence from the country described by earlier generations of historians, with its languorous plumed aristocrats, its burgeoning cities awash in new luxuries, its great armies of the indigent poor desperately scrabbling to fill their stomachs, and its great bloody dramas of the Bastille, the Terror, the Vendée, and Thermidor. But Baker's logic is impeccable, and his arguments are convincing. No serious reader can dismiss him, however much she may prefer the thundering cadences of Carlyle, the lyrical hosannas of Michelet, or the gritty cynicism of Richard Cobb.

So should historians move beyond Baker's vision of the Revolution, and if so, how? Is it possible to interpret the great acts of political imagination that he describes as something other than simply the "play of discursivity"? Must political history consist of nothing more than a meticulous tracing of the sinuous, slippery currents of language? Is any attempt to construct a larger historical narrative linking past and present nothing but a futile exercise in myth-making, as certain postmodern historians (though not Baker himself) have insisted? It is at this frustrating juncture that Sophia Rosenfeld has appeared, with her apparently odd strategy of considering Revolutionary politics from the vantage points of ballet, pantomime, and the education of the deaf.

III.

THE EDUCATED CLASSES of eighteenth-century France, most of them drilled in the rhetorical arts by demanding Jesuit schoolmasters, had a facility for words rarely equaled in the history of the planet. Open almost any book of French Revolutionary writings, and you will come across page after page of impeccably eloquent French prose, to all appearances set down as fast as the author could wield a quill. (Had it taken them much longer, figures such as Robespierre would have necessarily spent the entire Revolution behind a writing desk, given how much they wrote.) Yet these same individuals had a deep fascination, indeed often an obsession, with non-verbal forms of communication. They flocked to pantomimes and to the experimental ballets

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of Jean-Georges Noverre, debated the merits of Chinese characters over their own writing system, eagerly purchased accounts of "wild children" living in the forests without language, and made a cultural hero out of the *abbé* Charles-Michel de l'Épée, pioneering inventor of one of the first sign languages for the deaf. Is it a coincidence that the decipherer of Egyptian hieroglyphics was a Frenchman?

This apparently paradoxical fascination is not difficult to explain. Their very facility with words made French writers and orators all too aware of language's capacity for deception: of the way crystalline prose too often amounts to a sort of conjuror's trick, distracting and misleading the unwary. Matters were further complicated by the fact that eighteenth-century France was a heavily multilingual country. What we now call "standard French" was restricted to the educated classes themselves, and to the Paris basin and the Loire Valley. Outside these areas, the country's large peasant majority spoke a congeries of French dialects (Gallo, Normand, Burgundian, Lorrain, Picard, and so on), or distinct non-French languages such as Breton, Alsatian German, Flemish, and Basque. The entire southern third of France spoke not French, but dialects of a distinct Romance language now known as Occitan. Comic stories of misunderstandings abounded, as in Racine's claim to have asked for a chamber pot in the southern town of Uzès and to have received a bed warmer in its place (disaster was only barely averted).

The dominant trends in French philosophy in the eighteenth century reinforced this suspicion of language. From Locke's immensely influential *Essay on Human Understanding* to the writings of Condillac, Diderot, and Rousseau, the French were bombarded with impeccably eloquent warnings about the dangers of impeccable eloquence. Words, it was argued, could never completely describe the thing that they signified, and the more abstract the concept, the more imperfect the fit. Thus language inherently gave rise to vain disputes over meanings, and to the "abuse of words" by the ill-intentioned. In reaction, French thinkers, notably Diderot and Rousseau, very self-consciously speculated about whether a purely figurative "language of action" might possibly avoid the traps and the treasons of spoken language.

Some of the most fascinating chapters of Rosenfeld's book deal with the search for this "language of action." She highlights Noverre's quest to develop a *ballet d'action* capable of presenting the full range of meanings expressed by tragic drama through choreography and music alone. Noverre and his supporters actually argued for the superiority of ballet and pantomime over spoken drama, claiming for gesture a range and an energy lacking in spoken language, and asserting that gestures were incapable of conveying falsehoods. Noverre's efforts, including an ambitious attempt to stage one of Corneille's tragedies entirely in music and pantomime, were ultimately judged more impressive in theory than in practice. Still, they drew unprecedented numbers of spectators to the ballet in the 1770s.

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Design for a herald or a trumpeter in a French ballet, c. 1744

Rosenfeld also devotes impressive pages to l'Épée's school for the deaf, in which a new sign language was taught through the use of pantomime, beginning with basic gestures and gradually building to ever more complex and abstract signs. The priest claimed that this method allowed him to derive language from nature itself, and indeed many ecstatic observers believed that Noverre and l'Épée had recreated the actual primeval "language of action" of mankind, which had allegedly prevailed in the state of nature before the invention of speech. Rosenfeld carefully demonstrates how these ideas and enthusiasms were widely diffused by academies and other popular educational institutions.

But what did this all have to do with politics? Quite a lot. At the start of her discussion Rosenfeld makes a very simple point. If, following Furet, Hunt, and Baker, historians are to treat language itself as an instrument of political change, then they need to examine the ways different societies understood how language itself operates—something that is by no means constant over time. If the French of the eighteenth century had an obsessive suspicion of language, a heightened sensitivity to "abuses of words," and a desperate desire to devise more perfect forms of communication, then these sentiments would have deeply informed the way they understood language to work in politics. To understand the past languages of politics, then, we need to read them in the light of the epistemological assumptions that underpinned them.

This is the ambitious task that Rosenfeld sets herself in the second part of her book, which covers the Revolution and its immediate aftermath. For a start, she demonstrates that the Enlightenment dream of a more perfect language survived intact into the Revolutionary upheaval. Even while attempting complete overhauls of French administration, law, and customs, the successive Revolutionary assemblies also found copious time to ponder the reform of the French language, to debate how best to end "abuses of words," and even to discuss somehow establishing a gestural "language of action" as the basis of French legislation. A polymathic priest from Lorraine named Henri Grégoire blamed peasant resistance to the Revolution on the sorts of misunderstandings that Racine had encountered, and devised a massive project for the "eradication" of local dialects and regional languages in favor of standard French. Faced with economic collapse, impending military disaster, and

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numerous internal revolts, the delegates to the Revolutionary National Convention turned to the pressing business of grammar and punctuation.

The most utopian of Revolutionary projects evaporated after the fall of the Jacobins on the Ninth of Thermidor, but plans for the reform of language survived, and in some ways they intensified. The perpetrators of the coup, far from rejecting the Jacobins' linguistic point of view, adopted it wholeheartedly, denouncing the Terror itself as the ultimate "abuse of words." La Harpe was only one of many figures at the time to denounce the "monstrosities" of Revolutionary political language, and their analyses summoned forth more plans for the revision of grammar, the elimination of "aristocratic" tendencies from French, and even the formulation of a hieroglyphic writing system that might represent any spoken language in perfectly rational form.

The story of Revolutionary language politics only really came to an end, Rosenfeld shows, when members of the influential group known as the *idéologues* finally broke with linguistic utopianism at the end of the 1790s. In the name of social stability, they argued, legislators needed to concentrate on improving existing systems of French-language education, and on making use of the language already at their disposal—the language of the people—to promote an acceptance of the Revolution on rational and scientific grounds. With the dawn of the nineteenth century, the idea of a perfect language gradually receded from the realm of politics into that of utopian fiction.

It is a fascinating story; but its larger significance, Rosenfeld forcefully argues, was not simply that the dream of a perfect language led legislators to contemplate dialectical differences when they might more profitably have occupied themselves devising new ways of protecting food supplies. It was rather that their linguistic assumptions led politicians of all stripes to consider political difference as the result of faulty or deceptive communication. "Revolutionary political culture," Rosenfeld observes,

> with its emphasis on consensus and harmony and its antipathy to factionalism or even contestation ... should be viewed as a direct result of its framers' historically specific epistemological suppositions and assumptions. The first of these was the idea that the *abus des mots*, rather than legitimate differences of opinion, constituted the root cause of most dissension and strife. The second was that a perfected language, modeled after the "methodical" language of signs,

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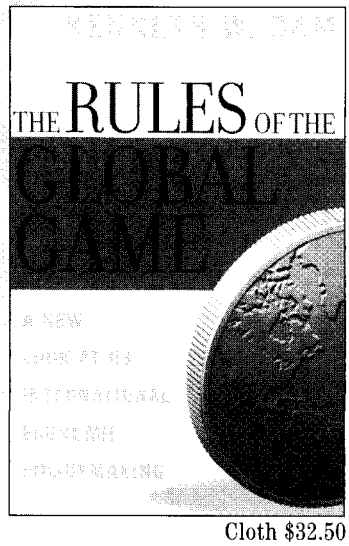

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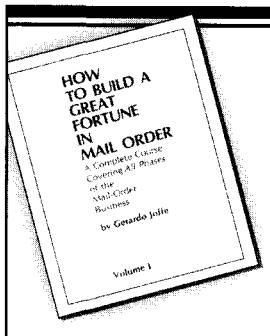
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> could be . . . a vehicle of peace in the social sphere.

This short passage has large implications for any understanding of the French Revolution as a cultural event. It suggests that the Revolutionaries' basic mental assumptions about the way the world worked predisposed them to precisely the sort of trust in a unitary sovereign will that was identified by Furet and Baker.

For if political disagreements derived from various forms of miscommunication, then limiting the power of government so as to protect minority opinions, and designing a system of government to accommodate and to balance a range of political positions, was self-evidently absurd. Whatever Montesquieu might have said on the issue, working a system of checks and balances into a constitution made no more sense than working it into an astronomy class. Protecting a person's right to deceive the people through the "abuse of words" was not simply foolish, it was also criminal. For this reason, liberal political ideas, with their emphasis on limiting executive power and guaranteeing individual rights, could start to find purchase in France only after the dream of a more perfect language lost its quasi-occult aura in the years around 1800. And by that point, of course, the political chaos had grown so great that Napoleon had arrived to pick up the battered pieces.

Rosenfeld is proposing a way of understanding political change that goes a significant step beyond tracking the careers of particular words and concepts. "The rhetoric of politics," she writes in her introduction, "always stems from a wider variety of sources and is supported by a wider set of beliefs than simply the political theories or political languages of the past." In other words, if we can identify significant epistemological shifts, such as the rise of new ways of understanding language itself, then we can begin to figure out why particular visions of the political succeeded while others did not. We can gain a sense of why political languages changed, and begin re-integrating the sort of analyses that Baker has conducted into a wider analysis of past cultures.

IV.

But is Rosenfeld correct? Has she really demonstrated the connection between epistemological change and political change? For all its nuance and its intellectual sophistication, the book does have a significant flaw, namely, a tendency to generalize too easily from the available evidence. In her first chapter, for instance, after having briefly illustrated the interest shown by prominent thinkers in the workings of language, Rosenfeld leaps to the conclusion that the *philosophes* as a whole had a "desire to explain the workings of the world in linguistic terms." This is true enough in one sense, but the French Enlightenment was famously and voraciously eclectic. Its leading figures could gorge themselves one month on linguistic theory, and the next month turn to law, or commerce, or religion, or even opera as the object of their intellectual passions. They did indeed have a desire to explain the world in linguistic terms—but also in political terms, psychological terms, social terms, material terms, scientific terms. To prove her case beyond a doubt, Rosenfeld would need not simply to track concern about the "abuse of words" through the *philosophes'* explicit writings on language, but to demonstrate that the concern pervaded the entirety of their works. This would have been an enormous and even quixotic undertaking, and Rosenfeld does not attempt it.

The same problem arises in her treatment of the Revolution. Figures such as Robespierre shared the *philosophes'* eclecticism. They were great amateurs, and also great joiners, attending meetings of all manner of societies for the improvement of mankind. Henri Grégoire, whom Rosenfeld presents principally as a linguistic reformer, spent the Revolutionary years dilating to his colleagues on topics that ranged from the emancipation of the Jews to the abolition of colonial slavery, the reform of the Catholic liturgy, and the origins of the "liberty tree," as well as the eradication of local patois. It is certainly significant that Robespierre belonged to a Society of Amateurs of the French Language, but Rosenfeld cannot say whether he devoted more than a fraction of his time to its activities. She is on firmer ground when she shows how, under the Terror, Robespierre grew ever more fearful, even paranoid, about the "abuse" and the "dominion" of words, and ever more strident in his denunciations of eloquence.

If Rosenfeld sometimes assumes rather than demonstrates the political importance of ideas about language, it may be because she has too easily embraced the diagnoses of the Terror that were offered in the immediate aftermath of Thermidor. Figures such as La Harpe and the *idéologue* Destutt de Tracy (who may have invented the word "ideology") have a peculiar appeal today, because their remarks on the importance of language jibe so well with postmodern thinking on the subject. Not surprisingly, it is the period of their own greatest political influence, after 1794, that provides Rosenfeld with her richest and most persuasive evidence. The *idéologues'* conception of precise language as an instrument for reshaping the social order undergirded their plans for a hierarchical national educational system, one whose legacy is still alive in France today.

But language arguably loomed so in post-Thermidorian politics for very specific and limited political reasons. The perpetrators of the coup against the Jacobins faced the almost impossible task of accounting for and denouncing the Terror without calling into question the democratic republican ideals to which both they and the Jacobins appealed. Calling Robespierre an abuser of words gave them a convenient method of surgically separating the "abusive" man from his sound political principles. Rosenfeld tends to read the intensity of post-Thermidorian engagement with the question of language back into the politics of the Terror, the early Revolution, and even the Enlightenment. So while her history of linguistic politics itself is masterful and convincing, her broader conclusions as to the Revolution's underlying epistemological basis remain suggestive rather than definitive.

And yet they are enormously suggestive. Not all of Rosenfeld's claims may survive further research, but her ideas on how to place political languages into a broad historical canvas deserve to have a powerful and lasting influence. Not surprisingly, she is not the only historian presently working along such lines. In the field of French Revolutionary history, Paul Friedland has developed a strong and provocative argument about how changes in abstract notions of representation—how one thing stands for another—shaped the emergence of new forms of political thought. He has uncovered remarkable and surprising parallels between changing ideas of representation in politics and in the world of theater, and also between the ideas of counter-Revolutionary royalists on the one hand and the most radical Jacobins on the other. He uses these parallels to show why liberal ideas of representative democracy had such difficulty gaining acceptance in Revolutionary France, in a conclusion fully consonant with Rosenfeld's (and, more generally, with those of Furet and Baker). Lynn Hunt, in her recent work on the origins of human rights, draws striking connections between notions of the individual self first expressed in eighteenth-century novels and the languages of individual rights during the Revolution. In sum, the field is turning towards the elusive territory of epistemological shifts; and Rosenfeld deserves the credit for giving this interest its first sustained and explicit demonstration.

We may hope that such new approaches may lead historians to fit the French Revolution into new large-scale narratives of

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Western history. Rosenfeld herself does not have such grandiose ambitions, but her work does suggest some possible paths to follow. The idea of a perfect language has obvious religious roots, in the story of the Tower of Babel, and in the case of Christ's apostles being heard in the native tongues of each of their listeners. In the seventeenth century, some French clerical scholars believed that the Celtic languages still retained traces of the original, perfect language of Eden. Arguably the Enlightenment dream of a perfectly expressive primeval language of gesture amounted to a secularization of the scriptural stories, while the projects of Noverre, d'Épée, and the Revolutionaries transposed the longed-for linguistic paradise from the mythic past to the future, and therefore from the realm of history and legend to that of politics. It might be possible, then, to link Rosenfeld's evidence to the decline of outward forms of religious observance chronicled by a host of historians in recent decades. The theme awaits its historian.

More materially-minded historians might explore the connections between concerns over the "abuse of words" and the rise of a commercial economy. In the eighteenth century, the French became more dependent than ever before on instruments of credit, forms of paper money, stock shares, and complex state annuities: on words signifying things of value, but eminently subject to abuse in the form of default, fraud, and counterfeit. At the same time, the burgeoning group of *nouveaux riches* found it increasingly easy to purchase traditional markers of high status, from elegant mansions to sumptuous clothing to nobility itself, leading critics to lament that these symbols had turned into empty and deceptive words. In an era of mobile wealth, the most sacred of words seemed to bow before the pursuit of lucre. This relationship between eighteenth-century commerce and epistemology is also ripe for exploration.

The difficulty with these hypotheses, of course, is that they rest mostly on inference, as does Rosenfeld's own interpretation of the Revolution. Historians making her sort of argument will never find "smoking gun" pieces of evidence lying forgotten in dusty corners of obscure provincial archives. Rosenfeld cannot hope to stumble across a letter from Robespierre to Saint-Just confessing that he got the idea for the Terror at the ballet. And while Robespierre's executioners may have explicitly blamed the Terror on abuses of the language, they were no more exempt than anyone else from practical and ideological influences on their own choice of words.

Any worthwhile "epistemological history," therefore, cannot content itself simply with quoting sources such as La Harpe, whose remarks about Revolutionary language happen to resonate so powerfully with our own postmodern preoccupations. It must patiently sift through as broad and as deep a body of evidence as possible, piling up the citations and considering possible objections, until patterns of resemblance and contrast emerge with unmistakable force and clarity. It is not an easy undertaking, and it should not be confused with the "collage" method all too present in contemporary cultural studies, in which a critic finds a few chance similarities in disparate cultural forms (ideally involving some form of sexual transgression) and announces—*voilà!*—a cultural shift of "Foucauldian" proportions. A serious "post-linguistic turn" kind of history requires a deep and powerful familiarity with the most important philosophy and literature of the age in question (and an unfashionable readiness to identify certain works and authors as more profound than others). It demands backbreaking work and painstaking explication. There are precious few examples of the method, but Sophia Rosenfeld has given us a fine one. ■

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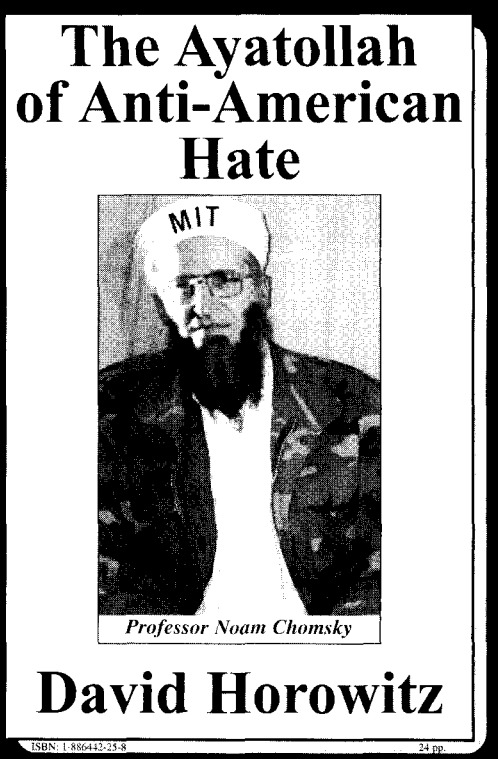

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Ruins

"THE BENDING, FOLDING, curving shapes of the World Trade Center wreckage echo the neo-Baroque contortions of blob architecture as practiced by Greg Lynn, Ben van Berkel and others." What luck! Or so I must believe from Herbert Muschamp's comforting declaration, in *The New York Times* on November 11, that what he beheld at ground zero falls smoothly into line with the latest thinking about "the idea of the architectural fragment." Will sense be conferred upon the smoking senselessness of Liberty Plaza by blobism? I am not familiar with the work of Greg Lynn, Ben van Berkel, and others, and so I do not know. The grieving families can hope. But wait, a larger gift of significance, a greater sanctification by fashion, is also proposed. Muschamp remarks upon "the resemblance between the wreckage at ground zero and some Frank Gehry projects." Death imitating art, you might say. And "Gehry's architecture ... has constructed an aesthetic context" for the site. I mean, how contemporary can a mass grave get? And wasn't it uncanny that on the very night before the catastrophe, the *Times*' critic, always searching for enchantment and always finding it, was vouchsafed an early look at the shop in TriBeCa, "ten blocks north of ground zero," that Frank Gehry had created for Issey Miyake? This privilege was followed, Muschamp scrupulously reports, by dinner with the princes of design. "As a result of my experience," he concludes, "the Walls [at ground zero] remind me of Miyake's pleated clothes, and of peaceful times."

SO HIS PROBLEM IS SOLVED. HE HAS prevented the event from exploding his framework. The danger of silence has been averted. The continuities rule, though he must learn to live with the morbidity of pleats. In this, certainly, Muschamp is not alone. There was something grotesque, in the days and the weeks immediately following the attack, about the alacrity with which architects leaped into the *Times* with exciting plans for the scene of the slaughter. It was as if history itself had announced a competition. Lower Manhattan was still breathing the dust of destruction, but the architects had beaten sorrow back and mastered the meaning of what had transpired. Designs, materials, the future of the skyscraper, the integration of glass and electronic media: as Christopher Moltisanti once observed, how can I express how little I give a fuck? But they were solving their problem, I guess; not their architectural problem, their spiritual problem. After all, the horror must somehow be put down. We have suffered the most extreme disruption that a bourgeois existence can suffer: an exposure to evil. We all have our avenues of flight. But when we flee, we must agree that we are fleeing.

"PIRANESI'S ENGRAVED VISIONS OF fantastic classicism," Muschamp confidently continues, "should be required study for those now gazing on ground zero." This is another way of saying that those who are now gazing on ground zero should avert their gaze. There is something especially egregious about the Piranesi recommendation. It is an attempt to assimilate the experience of ground zero into the experience of ruins, to transform it into the sort of lulling or elevating *veduta* with which we are all, as tourists or as museumgoers or as historians, sweetly familiar. Strictly speaking, of course, those are the ruins of the World Trade Center; but they are not ruins like the ruins of Luxor or Rome or Uxmal or Angkor Wat or Tintern Abbey, and the difference is worth pondering. What peace of contemplation is possible at Liberty Plaza, what ennobling idea about oblivion and eternity, what refining sensation of beauty? You cannot leave ground zero as you leave other ruins, with philosophical reflections about the inevitability of decay, because what happened here was not decay, and there was nothing inevitable about it. You cannot leave ground zero as you leave other ruins, with the warm memory of nature growing over history, because here there is only history, and it is cold. The reverence for ruins that has been a pillar of Western sensibility in the modern centuries has insisted that the encounter with them be a pleasurable encounter, but surely the pleasure was owed in part to the fact that the ruins before which Goethe and Wordsworth and Flaubert and Ruskin and Rilke and Proust swooned were not the ruins of their own homes and their own societies. The agony of the ruination had been felt by others long ago. Nobody is nostalgic for their own extinction. So with ruins, too, distance is the father of beauty. These are not the exotic and mysterious ruins of the past; these are the unexotic and unmysterious ruins of *us*.

THE FLIGHT INTO ARCHITECTURE IS the architects' way; but there is also the flight into culture, which is a more widespread phenomenon. Muschamp gives a rather ridiculous example of it: the surviving facades at ground zero, he writes, have "the classically stoic understatement of the titles Virginia Woolf gave her books. 'The Waves.' 'The Years.' 'Between the Acts.'" I do not know what he is talking about, but I know why he is talking about it. His reason, obviously, is that it eases his spirit. Associations from art seem to be helping, even if they are also hindering. "A Richard Serra opportunity," a prominent art historian called Liberty Plaza, and then he reversed himself: "a Jenny Holzer." A cultivated acquaintance in a local bookshop told me that the curved columns at ground zero put her in mind of Brueghel's *Babel*, which reminded me that I used to recall Genesis 11, and the "tower whose top may reach unto the heaven," when I was a young man witnessing, in awe and in anxiety, the construction of the World Trade Center. Poems are circulated that seem to have foreseen the present dread, even poems not written by Auden. And sometimes, when the flight into culture becomes the religion of culture, it can turn indecent: I recently heard about a dinner party at which a distinguished humanist argued that it was better that the World Trade Center had been bombed and all its people killed than that the Metropolitan Museum of Art had been bombed and all its paintings killed.

I CANNOT LOCATE THE BALM IN CULture. It is just not my piety. I discovered this when I went into ground zero, in a red hard hat. I was not prepared for what I saw. I do not know how to express the quality of my shock, except to say that it banished culture completely from my mind. I fell dumb and stood there as if I had never read a book. My observations erased my memories. I was without allusions and without metaphors. Can a mind be naked? Then I was naked, without coverings. All I could do was look, and pray to see. The metal was the color of an infernal tarnish. I learned that yellow smoke is released when iron is cut. The hole in the sky was more striking than the hole in the ground. I watched the cranes scoop up soil from the pit, and then I grasped that it was not soil. There was no soil in this place. What they were moving was the substance that was formed out of the dissolution of everything and everybody that had been crushed and incinerated: a deathloam. There were spots of it on my boots. I shivered and moved away. And when I left it was not culture that was restored immediately to my consciousness. It was politics; policy; American action.

LEON WIESELTIER

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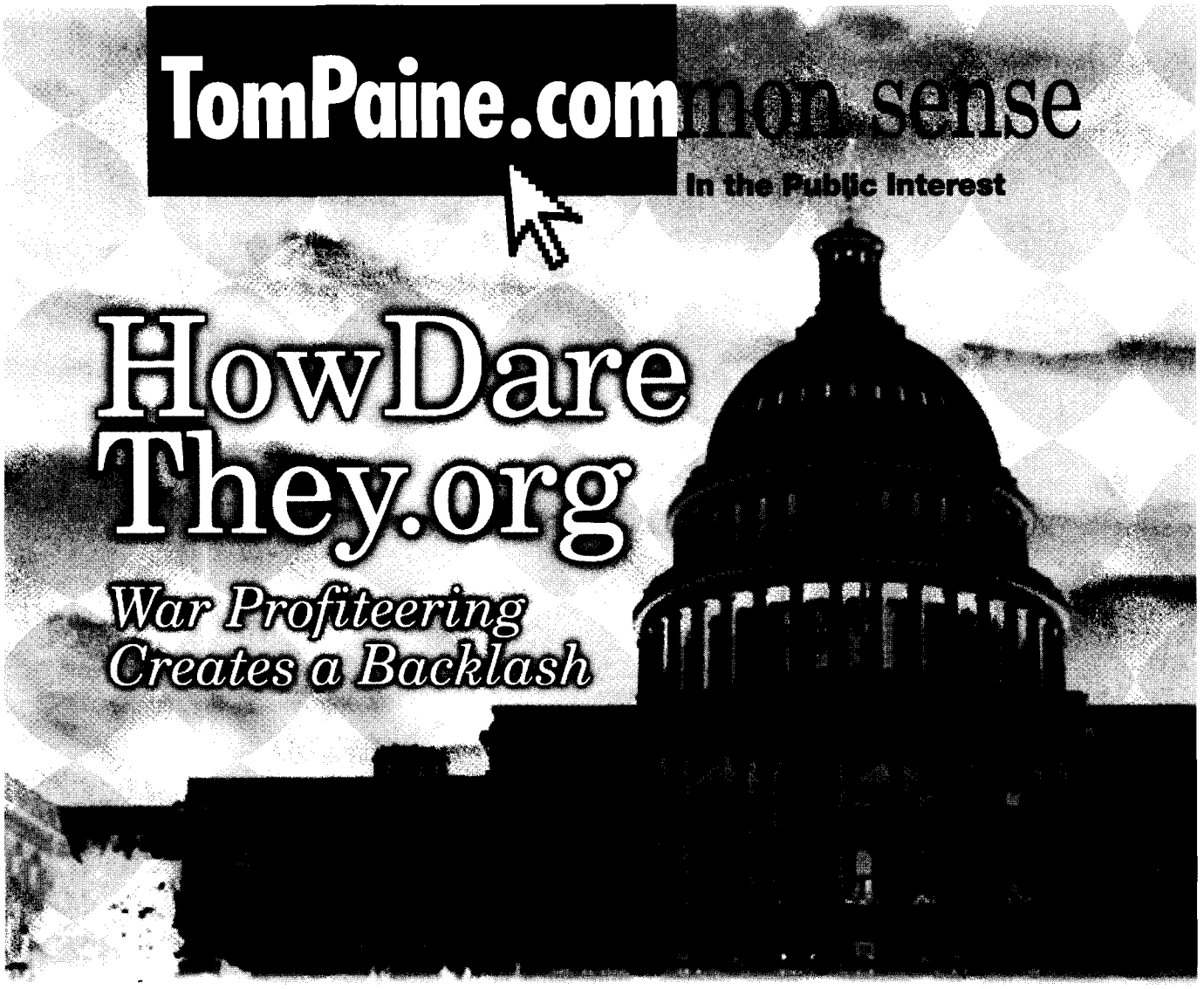

"It's amazing how the Republicans go out of their way to prove they are the party of rich folks and corporations," a senior Democratic Party official, quoted in the *New York Times,* said of the GOP's "economic stimulus" package.

That's not just partisan spin. The GOP proposal is so larded with giveaways to political patrons, so counter to economic common sense and genuine national interest, it's proven an easy target for ridicule. Ditto the GOP energy plan – another pre-9/11 agenda wrapped in post-9/11 urgency.

Such wartime profiteering is creating a backlash as Americans comprehend it, and the Democrats see an opportunity – use populist rhetoric to encourage that nascent anger.

A reasonable tactic, but an ironic one. The Democrats' populist credibility is a little thin. Years ago they began trading it for the chance to attract big campaign donors, many of whom also feed the GOP.

Now Democrats have difficulty defending the little guy. Witness their weak opposition to Bush's feed-the-rich tax cuts or their complicity in the airline bailout. On energy, they oppose oil drilling in the Arctic. But note their unwillingness to champion a bold alternative – an "All-American Energy Act" to rapidly boost home-grown renewable power and the jobs, self-reliance and security that go with it. How could Democrats ignore such a populist plum? They need energy industry contributions, too.

The people are without a party. Their anger must seek other outlets – and there are signs of a backlash. Like one hundred low-income community leaders protesting the stimulus and energy bills at the Capitol. **HowDareThey.org** is another.

"Congress and the White House are violating the post-9/11 ethos of shared sacrifice so blatantly, I just felt we had to say, 'How dare they?'" says Micah Sifry, a writer for Public Campaign and author of a forthcoming book on third-party politics. His idea: **HowDareThey.org.**

"This is about small-'d' democratic opposition to the power of big-money donors in national politics," Sifry says. "I hope it's a rallying point for people who think public servants ought to represent them, too."

TomPaine.com – Profiteering Creates a Backlash
Featuring "Dems Duck and Cover" by Kevin Reikes... "Needed: Aggressive Progressives" by John Nichols... "A Rich Return on Investment" tracks campaign cash behind the 'stimulus'... and a Q&A on the founding of ***HowDareThey.org****.*

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Teachers and School Choice: Dual Standards

At a Harvard University forum last year, an Ohio teacher union officer disclosed that a third of his members enrolled their children in private schools.

Tom Mooney, president of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers, asserted that public school teachers had every right to those choices. He further stated that teachers "should not tolerate schools that we wouldn't send our own children to."

Mooney's colleagues concur. Explains Robert Chase, president of America's largest teacher union, "[T]here are...public schools that middle class parents, including me, would not want their children to attend."

Parental School Choice is Widespread — Unless You're Poor.

The Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) likewise believes that parents should choose which schools their children won't attend. BAEO also believes that parents should choose the schools their children do attend.

Why do these straightforward ideas spur so much public debate? One reason is that teacher unions and many of their members are of two minds when it comes to school choice. The situation is captured well in this title of an article in a scholarly journal: "DUAL STANDARDS AMONG TEACHERS — This School Is Good Enough for Other Kids but Not My Child" (*Urban Education*, October 1990). The article reported that only 60 percent of teachers in the Milwaukee Public Schools would want their child to attend the school at which they themselves taught.

Milwaukee and Cincinnati are typical of urban America when it comes to school choice. In big cities the percent of public school teachers who use private schools is much higher than for the public at large. While about 13 percent of all parents use private schools, census data show that a larger share of urban public school teachers make that choice (i.e., Cleveland, 34 percent; Chicago, 31 percent; Philadelphia, 28 percent; Baltimore, 26 percent; and so on).

To repeat, BAEO supports the right of public school teachers to make these choices. We simply believe that all parents, particularly those with limited incomes, should have the same opportunity. BAEO emphasizes the benefits that parents and their children experience through such options as charter schools; home schooling; private and public voucher programs; and innovative public-private education partnerships.

We find it difficult to comprehend that many of our local, state and national leaders who live in comfortable communities and send their children to some of the best public and private schools in the country, could prevent the rest of us from enjoying that same benefit.

baeo
Black Alliance for Educational Options

For more information go to: schoolchoiceinfo.org or baeo.org

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